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The manufacture of an author : Reinaldo Arenas's literary world, his readers and other contemporaries.

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The Manufacture of an Author

Reinaldo Arenas's literary world, his readers
and other contemporaries

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Ph.D in Spanish-American Studies

by
Claudio Canaparo

King's College London
University of London
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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to explore and discuss the relationship between Reinaldo Arenas's work and the academic literary criticism of it. The analysis is divided into six chapters. The first aims to establish a distinction between the different types of texts that the 'obra de Reinaldo Arenas' includes and to set out a few principles on which to base the subsequent discussion. The second explains the general critical approach which has been applied to Arenas's work, and leads into an examination of those critics who favour thematic interpretations of Arenas's fictional work (chapter 3). The investigation of the 'paratext', within which Arenas's work has tended to be encapsulated, continues a contrastive exposition of Arenas's theory of writing and the main 'book-length' studies of his fiction. His notion of a <pentagonía> is explored in chapter five along with the reasons why it has been considered Arenas's most important intellectual achievement by critics. Finally, the discussion centres on how 'cubanismo' has been used to construct the author and his texts.

A main hypothesis is that there is a close relationship between the way the name Reinaldo Arenas has become a synonym of 'author' (i.e. a set of suppositions about the texts) and the general line of interpretation of his books adopted by academic criticism. This thesis tries to show how such an interpretation rests on a more general – authorist and historicist – presupposition about the nature of literature and writing, one which has also tended to underlie the way in which academic criticism has conceived Latin American literature.

The attempt to classify both Arenas's work and the critical corpus addressed to it, is interpreted in this thesis as a function of the relationship between the construction of an author called Reinaldo Arenas and the establishment of the same author as object of critical reflection. It is argued that the case of Arenas exemplifies a particular way in which the object of literary criticism tends to be constituted, and that this problem cannot be ignored in any serious consideration and analysis of an author towards the end of the XX century.

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I dedicate this dissertation to A. G. who would prefer - far away and as it should be - to be anonymous.

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Un auteur, c'est avant tout un nom
signant une oeuvre: aux yeux de ses
contemporains comme au regard de l'histoire,
il n'existe d'abord que par cette signature.

Naissance de l'écrivain
Alain Viala

Prologue

1. Different Approximations, one and the same problem

The process of creating an author, in terms of history of literature and of the publishing market, is the result, in principle, of an agreement; based upon a contract in which the writings attributed to the character-author and the proposals of those who conduct literary analysis in a public manner -in particular those who belong to the academic community- are equally involved. I have called this process the *manufacture of an author*. It brings with it, in the particular case of Arenas, the problem of approaching a set of writings which are conditioned by the difficulty of distinguishing paratext and text. This thesis aims to set out the methodological grounds for tackling that problem.

I have therefore dealt throughout this thesis with the description of some constants found in the work of academic literary critics who are involved in the analysis and constitution of what I have termed Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. The answer to the question <What is an author?> arises here in an indirect manner as it is *through* the different conceptions developed by literary critics -their ideas of history, literature, reality, etc.- that this answer, the concept of an *author of literary fiction* arises. The reason we insist on the qualities of agreement and contract which are at the basis of the process of manufacturing an author is, precisely, because nowadays any notion of an author is in fact a product which concerns several narratives.

Narratives among which those attributed to the character-author himself are not always the most relevant, although they undoubtedly constitute the *driving-force* when defining a writer's <works> when these are constructed, as I have suggested from different narratives.

In describing these constants, one can refer to the six chapters of this thesis as six *approximations* (aproximaciones) to one and the same problem. That is to say: how the writings attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, and at the same time, what I have called Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, have been conceived, analyzed and described. The six approximations therefore differ with regard to the material they deal with but, if my hypothesis is correct, they coincide in their conclusions, diagnosis and, even more to the point, in the epistemological premise that drives them.

2. Chapter 1: First Approximation

The aim of the first chapter is to establish a general work frame for the discussion. In this respect, and in relation to some passages of Cabrera Infante's work [1992], I have made reference to a *romantic* (romántica) notion of literature, and to how this notion is related, not only to an idea of the literary but also, to a conception of the real and the truthful, both of which attempt to supply its context of legitimation.

In this chapter, I first try to describe Reinaldo Arenas's idea of literature and how this idea substantially differs from that of those who have worked on the analysis of Reinaldo Arenas's works. This distinction prove to be essential when considering what the academic literary critics of Reinaldo Arenas have said and how they have said it.

In this first chapter I also attempt to raise some basic issues to be developed later in the chapters that follow: firstly, a general notion of history and reality within which the literary has been established and defined in accordance to the terms used by the literary critics, secondly, as a way of considering the biographical aspects of an author, thirdly, a general idea of *paratextualité*, fourthly, a brief description of the bibliography attributed to Reinaldo Arenas and, finally, the idea that Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* stands in a contemporary world where the relationship between perception and knowledge has been broken, fractured.

3. Chapter 2: Second Approximation

The second chapter will deal with what I believe, is to date, the most serious work on Reinaldo Arenas [I refer to Ette, 1992]. Nevertheless, in spite of its aims this book centres on an illusion which, as I hope to show in the following chapters, does not differ, epistemologically speaking, from the work of other literary critics who tackle the same problem. In this sense, Ottmar Ette's work [1992], like that of other critics whom I will consider throughout this thesis, *does not distinguish* between the biological dimension of a person and the figure of an author; the construction, the manufacture of an author. This lack of distinction, in epistemological terms, results in a series of conclusions and associations which I have identified as a 'romantic notion of literature' (noción romántica de la literatura). Even more pertinent, is the fact that this lack of distinction results in a series of presuppositions [cf. 'presupposizioni': Eco, 1979] -concerning what 'the real' is, what history is, etc.- and which are not discussed in the works that I generally identify under the name of 'literary criticism' (crítica literaria) -in particular those focussing on Reinaldo Arenas's writings, which I have referred to as 'arenismo'.

I also concentrate in this chapter on the idea of literature that Arenas put forward and refer to it as 'visual literature' (*literatura visual*), as the presence of images are fundamental to it and also because this idea of literature can prevent us from mistaking the auto/biographical story of an author for the bibliographical narrative attributed to him, or vice versa -a confusion which, added to the more common one, mentioned earlier, between the biological person and the character-author- confirms, from my point of view, the lack of epistemological reflection which characterises the so-called academic literary critic (*crítica literaria universitaria*) -at least those focussing on the work of Reinaldo Arenas.

4. Chapter 3: Third Approximation

This third approximation - on the basis of an analysis of the most widely circulated of the collective authored works on Reinaldo Arenas [I am referring to Hernández Miyares / Rozencvaig, 1990] - aims at revealing how the different analyses are reliant upon the same epistemological considerations. It also aims to show how these considerations cannot be dissociated from an idea of literature whose premises derive their rationale, not from the works attributed to Reinaldo Arenas but from the academic institution in which these analyses finally take place and find their legitimacy.¹

As an *extreme* example of this situation, I describe Myrna Solotorevsky's work [1993] which could be considered, as I have suggested, to be a type of 'manual' of these epistemic and institutional 'sobre- entendidos'.

¹ To allocate only the initials of the authors and the name of the institution in which these works were produced in the titles of the different paragraphs of Appendix 4 was a way of pointing out the dominance of the institutional *cursus honorum* despite the particular conditions of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

Finally, by way of a theoretical principle, this chapter sets out the distinction between what I have called 'los cuatro Reinaldos' (the four Reinaldos), who constitute in short what the thesis is based on: no idea of author could be understood in its complete dimension if one does not consider seriously, and take into account in its more radical consequences, the distinction between the bibliographical narrative (Reinaldo Arenas), auto/biographical story (*Reinaldo Arenas*) and the narrative regarding the protagonist of the literary analyses (*Arenitas*).

5. Chapter 4: Fourth Approximation

This chapter will explore the misinterpretation that the notion of literature followed by Arenas (as author, by means of interviews, declarations, editorial attitudes, etc.) generates, in the sense that, if as I suggest, the exercise of a *paratextualité* is that which mainly defines the idea of literature, then the risks of 'sexualist' interpretations [cf. Soto, 1994a and Smith, 1996] or 'historicist' ones [cf. R. Valero, 1991] are obviously greater.

In order to consider these risks and misinterpretations, the chapter presents:

- (1) an idea of territory, without any link to the perception of 'national literature' (*literaturas nacionales*) put forward by literary critics;
- (2) an insistence on the distinction between the biological person and the figure of the character-author in order to avoid any 'sexual or sexist vindication';
- (3) an idea of the essay in terms of Reinaldo Arenas himself which, I believe, allows us to observe the notions of reality and world which Reinaldo Arenas presupposed;
- (4) the idea of *romanticism* present in all the literary analyses I will consider;
- (5) the idea of 'historicism' which, taking for example R. Valero's [1991] analysis, is present throughout the majority of the works dedicated to Reinaldo Arenas, and finally
- (6) as in the previous point, an idea of 'literatura homosexual' which, taking for example F. Soto's [1994a]

analysis, is complemented by the aforementioned 'historicism' that is present throughout the majority of the works dedicated to Reinaldo Arenas.

This chapter also tries to describe the idea of a 'pragmatics of writing', in the sense that, as I believe, Reinaldo Arenas's so-called *oeuvre* is not comprised so much by its 'literariness' (*literaturidad*), but as with other contemporary artists, in relation to the meaning and dimensions of the activity of writing itself.

6. Chapter 5: Fifth Approximation

The fifth approximation is an attempt to describe the critical studies dedicated to Reinaldo Arenas in two complementary ways. The first consists of an analysis of the most influential book -in publishing market terms- of those dedicated to Reinaldo Arenas (I am referring to Soto, 1994a) and the second consists of a description of what has been understood as 'literatura testimonial' and of the epistemological presuppositions that this literature implies. As I will suggest, both perspectives are related and this relationship finds its strongest expression, in Francisco Soto's works [1994a] -where the critic makes use of the same epistemological presuppositions (the idea of 'mundo', reality, literature, etc.) used by those who present a 'literatura comprometida o de testimonio'. Hence my suggestion that the author Miguel Barnet and the academic critic F. Soto make an ideal couple. These two ways serve to map the basic scheme upon which, I believe, the majority of those who have studied Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* base themselves.

In this chapter, I aim to establish the character whom I call *Arenitas*, a figure produced by literary critics. In other words, *Arenitas* is, I believe, firstly, the character common to the analyses of literary critics and he is the Reinaldo Arenas whom everyone names and refers to and who, from a general

perspective, is confused with the auto/biographical story and/or with the bibliographical narrative.

From this perspective I therefore intend to establish the idea of auto/biographical story, different from the bibliographical narrative and different too from the biological dimension of the person. These are concepts which will be established theoretically in Chapter 3.

7. Chapter 6: Final Approximation

This chapter aims at demonstrating how even the most - supposedly - *avant-garde* analyses [cf. Urbina, 1994; Béjar, 1987; Lugo Nazario, 1995], constitute a primitive and obvious exercise from an epistemological point of view. But, more importantly, on the basis of this description, the chapter will be dedicated to studying how the bibliographical narrative works - not only how the works dedicated to Reinaldo Arenas have evolved in historiographical terms but also how this situation has influenced the construction of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* itself, and influenced the reception of books attributed to the author and the constitution of the different interpretations of them.

In this sense I consider it relevant to reinforce this *approximation* by means of a description of the most complete work - in informative terms - dedicated to Reinaldo Arenas (I am referring to R. Valero, 1991). Thus, specifically, taking Roberto Valero's book as an example, I intend to present an outline of how, what I indicate to be a bibliographical narrative, functions.

Finally, taking into consideration the relevance of *paratextualité* in the definition of the idea of literature and *oeuvre*, I try to demonstrate how that

hypothesis could be related to the construction of a bibliographical narrative or to the constitution of a historiography with regard to a particular author. In the same way, in addition to a *book* such as Valero's one, I also consider an argument and a concept -the idea of carnival and 'carnavalización' (the carnivalesque)- and offer a graph which allows the observation of the idea of *paratextualité* in relation to the bibliographical narrative.

8. The Manufacture of an Author

'The manufacture of an author' is the proposed title of this thesis in the sense that the hypothesis implicit in it is that any author constitutes an elaboration, an historiographical and commercial construction in which a great variety of elements are involved. At no time have I tried to consider this actual and contemporary aspect as negative or undesirable: every author is a *personnage*, a rhetorical construction (in a Barthesian sense) composed of different elements (as I illustrate in Chapter 5) that function at two levels - on the one hand, in market terms and, on the other hand, in terms of a historiographical position (in terms of a history of literature).

In a sense, one could say that this thesis is restricted to the notion of an author in terms of literary fiction but, even had it not been the objective of this thesis, I believe that these basic conjectures could be extended to the notion of author in general.

The greatest obstacle for those who have dedicated themselves to the study of Reinaldo Arenas's works from the point of view of a *contemporary* idea of an author is to be found, I believe, in the constant lack of distinction, firstly, between the biological person and the character called author and, secondly, between the different narratives which have become relevant to the construction of that character ('los cuatro Reinaldos' and, in particular,

the distinction between an auto/biographical story and bibliographical narrative). This lack of distinction generates a constant misunderstanding in epistemological terms which, I suggest, ends up being solved in two different ways: (1) through 'historicism' (an appeal to 'the real', to a hypothetical truth of the historic) or, as in the majority of the cases, (2) through a radical *biographicism* (biografismo) in which all legitimacy lies in the search for biographical events in order to justify the idea of the literary which the critic is working with.

The confusions between the different elements which compose the figure of an author also imply a confusion when trying to distinguish between the figure of an author and the notion of *oeuvre*. In this sense, the *romantic* idea of literature -which I mention as a driving force within the critics' works- makes the author/*oeuvre* association its main slogan. In my view, this association could only constitute a series of misunderstandings which do not allow an accurate and precise analysis: to distinguish between manufacturing a figure of the author and constituting an *oeuvre* (attributed to the same author) is a principle of analysis which I believe makes it possible to understand that - even when the notion of *oeuvre* is implicit in any actual construction of the idea of author- the *tempo* (different forms of 'temporalization') when referring to an author or referring to an *oeuvre* has different characteristics -just as the elements relevant to the construction of an author, or of an *oeuvre* are different. For example, while the auto/biographical story is essential to the notion of the author, the bibliographical narrative is the informational basis of every idea of the *oeuvre*. In other words: the evident complementarity between manufacturing the idea of an author and the elaboration of an *oeuvre* - which is, I believe, Reinaldo Arenas's case - is not sufficient reason to confuse the figure of

author and the notion of *oeuvre*, because that would be to ignore the fact that they are generated differently and with different resources.

Finally, this thesis is intended to demonstrate: firstly, that the analyses of literary critics devoted to Arenas's works agree on the same epistemological presuppositions, even though their arguments and justifications can be different, and that secondly, in doing so, they ignore the distinction between what I have called 'los cuatro Reinaldos' and, because of this, they can only confuse those components that are vital to the understanding of the construction and manufacture of an author in contemporary terms.

Those readers who may wish to follow these arguments into further explorations of Arenas's work, are referred to a CD ROM which is in press at King's College London and in which I undertake a further investigation of all of Arenas's texts in the context of the issues discussed here in this thesis.

Chapter 1

1. Arenas' times

It was a Cuban, other than Reinaldo Arenas, who stated that 'Colón salió de la España medieval y de un viaje entró en el mundo moderno al desembarcar en América, en un verdadero *time warp* histórico y toda la humanidad viajó en esas tres carabelas' [Cabrera Infante, 1992: 464]. Reinaldo Arenas, about whom this study is concerned, was a notable perpetrator of a form of literary *time warp*. This is the Reinaldo Arenas who, having escaped from Havana, was, according to an Argentinian journalist, modern and a scarcely published 'marielito' of 1980 - a man, who in one journey entered the postmodern world, i.e. the United States environment in which literature was no longer a self-contained value, and the world of publishing upon disembarking in Miami. With him, one might add, there travelled towards its crisis an entire way of creating and understanding literature, one which Jorge Luis Borges had already left in serious doubt, by constructing a single literature *out of all literature* and situating literature itself as reflections upon the history of literature [see Annick Louis, 1997].

In this work I will attempt to describe how Reinaldo Arenas breaks with a long and widespread literary tradition -one which we could euphemistically call romantic and South American- in which 'life and literature' were regarded as synonymous or, rather, in which the *legitimacy* -or illegitimacy-

of all writing was established on the basis of the identification between 'life' and 'literature'.

Book, biography and manuscript are, in one way or another, the three general concepts which will recur with some frequency throughout this work. This being so, some initial clarification is called for. The biological existence of Reinaldo Arenas as an issue to be considered falls outside the remit of this thesis. In this sense, Reinaldo Arenas will here stand for the name of a *biobibliographical* narrative.² In general we will call biography that which in other spheres has been termed - referring above all to the link (commercial or imaginary) between the reader and author to the degree to which in every work there exists an image of this bond - *autobiographical pact* [P. Lejeune, 1975], *récit de vie* [P. Lejeune, 1980], *embodiment* [Paul John Eakin, 1992] or more precisely, an auto/biographical story.³ In turn, auto/biographical story can be dealt with in direct relation to the author's *oeuvre* and, even more so, as a part of the *oeuvre* itself: we will even see to what extent Reinaldo Arenas made use of this paratextual condition which every auto/biography presupposes in a literary writer. One must also distinguish between book and manuscript in that, for the time being, the first wears a public and commercial aspect (published) unknown to the second.

This thesis, in another respect, ignores the sexist interpretations recently made of Reinaldo Arenas's work [see, for instance: David W. Foster, 1991; Paul Julian Smith, 1996; E. Béjar, 1989; and Ian Lumsden, 1995].⁴

²'Narrative' or 'narrations' will be considered synonyms of the Spanish word *narración*.

³'Story' or 'account' will be considered synonyms of the Spanish word *relato*.

⁴ There is a phrase of Roberto Valero's, a friend and collaborator of Arenas, which expresses clearly this sexist point of view : 'Considero que se debe analizar seriamente que (sic) relación había -o hay- entre la creación alucinada de Arenas y su hambre sexual que era desmedida y muy peligrosa en Cuba, como lo fue también aquí (he is referring to the United States) que le ocasionó la muerte.' [1994a, 46] Opposition to this interpretation and to others which, although apparently more sophisticated, are similar, is one of the tasks this work undertakes.

Reinaldo Arenas's undisputed homosexuality is an issue of his auto/biography whose description makes no contribution to any particularly interesting interpretation of his books and works, of what we will call, for convention's sake, 'the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas': the placing of homosexuality in terms of auto/biographical narrative, in the first place, and, in the second place, the relation of these narratives to the other tales and narratives which constitute what we shall later define as *biobibliography*, are indispensable conditions for any treatment of homosexuality in Reinaldo Arenas. Even if we take into account the views of Virgilio Piñera (' <Los hombres de verdad no leen libros>, explicaba Virgilio. <La literatura es mariconería y para maricón, yo>.' [Cabrera Infante, 1992: 319]) -unarguably the literary mentor of the writer in question- as Arenas' own (which is not altogether impossible if we take into account Arenas's statement about his taste being 'for men, not for homosexuals' [1992]), we will extract only an ethnic idea of the literary. Not even Piñera himself could easily have held such a view, because, among many other reasons, with such thinking he could not have *survived* sixteen years of voluntary exile in Buenos Aires.

Reinaldo Arenas's originality has undoubtedly nothing to do with his homosexual manifestos -even when these, as we shall see, are relevant and of key significance in his own auto/biographical narrative.

2. The literary future in the past

In his misfortune, Arenas was a fortunate man: whilst he worked on his manuscripts he did not deal with the world of the language of the university or of any publishing market. Neither did he really begin to publish until after 1980 -as we shall see further on, the majority of publications undertaken before 1980 had little or no influence on either Reinaldo Arenas, Cuba, or

the Spanish-speaking publishing market,⁵ whether because they were editions in other languages (such as *Celestino antes del alba*), or non-mainstream editions (such as *Con los ojos cerrados*), or because from the viewpoint of Arenas himself, as a producer of manuscripts, these publications had little impact - to the point where Arenas himself was unaware of some of them.⁶

Reinaldo Arenas never was, nor had pretensions to being, an intellectual but aspired, rather to be, simply a maker: he did not speak specifically *of his books* but concerned himself with stressing practical aspects of their gestation - another oddity in so-called Latin American literature which finds an immediate comparison only in Jorge Luis Borges with the intention of constructing a *paratext* of his own works [cf. Louis, 1997]. Jorge Luis Borges achieved this by intellectual means over a period of fifty years - a period in which, as Louis demonstrated, Borges originally published more than 600 pieces of writing but only allocated in his *oeuvres* around 170 of the them [see Louis, 1997: 9]. What makes comparable, in these terms, the Arenas' works with the Borges' literary *manoeuvres* is one similar principle regarding the meaning of 'lo literario': no representation of any reality and no romantic identification between 'vida' and 'obra'.

⁵ A *succès de prestige* such as that obtained by Reinaldo Arenas in France, with books as yet unpublished in Spanish, is in fact linked more to the author's image than to specific possibilities of commercial publication. In other words, the French editions of *Celestino antes del alba*, of *El mundo alucinante* and of *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* - to mention only those editions pre-dating 1980 - contributed to the creation of the image of a writer named Reinaldo Arenas but did not facilitate, to the extent to which many believe, the publication in Spanish of his books. In fact, Argos Vergara was the only publishing house (now no longer in existence) which published three of his novels (*Cantando en el pozo*, *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* and *Otra vez el mar*) in a single edition each, the first of these only two years after Arenas' flight from Cuba. Otherwise the editions of books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas have always come from small publishing houses (Kosmos, Dador, Mariel, Betania, Universal). This point will be taken up again later.

⁶ It could even be said that the notion of an author is something which on various occasions Arenas builds from nothing - another similarity, not always clearly seen, between Arenas and Jorge Luis Borges is the sense that, for Borges, constructing a 'Obra Completa' (paratextual job) was, at the same time, the creation of an author [see for example Rodríguez Monegal, 1987].

This study attempts to describe the manner in which, starting from a discontinuity between the literary market and scriptorial work (i.e. writing as art), between manuscripts on the one hand and books on the other, Reinaldo Arenas did not produce one book or several but rather a *body of work*. By this is meant the fact that, more than any other Latin American author, he assembled his various writings into a large-scale coherence. This *oeuvre* is also a result of how, precisely through 'unpublished' publishing experience, he wrote and put in place the first and fundamental version of a paratext of these same works - not so much in that he had said how and why his writings should be read, as with a Borgesian preoccupation with deciding where, when and how a large part of his manuscripts should -or should not- be published *once they had been produced*. In addition and above all, Arenas established which amongst them would be narratives and why (first bibliographical narration). Reinaldo Arenas, it could be said, devoted the last few years of his life to the task of *paratextualising* his work through corrections, revisions and completions of manuscripts already begun, through dividing and re-grouping texts, and through new editions of works already published abroad. The work thus revised was, by and large, complete when he escaped from Cuba in 1980. In this sense there is no doubt about the sharpness with which Arenas understood the consequences of a historiographical reading:

Si me hubiese quedado en Cuba, sencillamente yo me hubiera muerto y me hubieran <rehabilitado>, y hubieran hecho de mí un escritor completamente pro-castrista, lo que ha pasado con escritores como Lezama y Virgilio Piñera, que nunca los dejaron salir de Cuba, que tenían incesantes invitaciones a través de todas las universidades literarias y no los dejaron salir. Desde luego se murieron en Cuba porque a no ser que fueran eternos tenían que morir allí. Cuando le publican cualquier cosa: "Murió en Cuba", "Nunca quiso dejar el país", y en el caso de Virgilio, su foto, y en el caso de Lezama Lima ha aparecido en

los órganos oficiales, en el periódico *Granma* y todo, como grandes escritores y todo, la rehabilitación, la tesis de los muertos... [L. Hasson, 1992a: 46].

At the same time, it is this peculiar condition of Reinaldo Arenas's work that highlights the state of the literary market today and which presents academic opinion and university criticism as a literary consecration *in extremis*. This phenomenon, which perhaps in the case of other writers has occurred less obviously -for example with Cabrera Infante- acquires in Reinaldo Arenas the status of incontestable evidence. In this sense, even now individuals -not to mention publishing houses- savagely and comprehensively dispute the intellectual property of his work: some with the credentials of 'homosexual studies', others 'because they were there', others 'because they were friends', others 'because he wrote them a letter', etc. - and when I say 'property of his work' I do not in fact refer to the publication of his books, which is still done by a small Miami publishing house, but rather to the act of *explaining* Reinaldo Arenas's bibliographical narration in a particular manner (anti-Castro, homosexual, etc.). Following this path, although for contrary reasons, a *literatura de testimonio* would therefore be made of that which we term Arenas' *oeuvre*, much as official Cuban history has done with regard to José Martí.

The situation of Reinaldo Arenas which I have identified, demonstrates that the appropriation of a work's paratext is the first step towards the acquisition of a brand name in both the academic and the literary market - one function of which would be to concede authority to the speaker on or about Reinaldo Arenas.⁷ This thesis proposes to describe how Arenas was, in fact, a fierce,

⁷ For the notion of *paratext* I intend basically to follow the empirical acception created for Gérard Genette in 1979 but developed fully in 1987, in *Seuils*: 'Le paratexte est donc pour nous ce par quoi un texte se fait livre et se propose comme tel à ses lecteurs, et plus généralement au public.' [Genette, 1987: 7] .

silent and effective adversary of such a conception of literature but also, at the same time, how Arenas takes profit and uses this situation in the academic and the literary market.

3. Imagination and biobibliography

'Inventos. Inventos... Pero la vida no puede tolerarse cuando sólo la habitan cosas figuradas, irreales. La vida necesita de la aventura, de lo diverso. El intercambiado choque de los cuerpos, el correr por sitios verdaderos...' [Arenas, 1980a: 88-89]

The fact that the narrative which we call biography might confuse its plot with the stories which Arenas creates in his manuscripts and books, should not be interpreted as being yet another romantic confusion between 'life' and 'work'. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the great majority of Reinaldo Arenas's readers commit this error -even someone who understood Arenas as well as the late Roberto Valero maintains something along these lines.

'Extrañamente, obra y vida se fueron uniendo hasta confundirse' [R. Valero, 1992a: 29].⁸ This statement, being unsupported, implicitly includes R.

⁸ As a result of this position, hypotheses are formulated which intensify this lack of clarity about possible resources and raise certain supposedly biographical elements, in isolation, to a kind of metaphysical limbo. [see Valero, 1994a: 46]. The fact is that this is R. Valero's own literary conception, a nineteenth century one and very different from that of Arenas. This may be favourable on the one hand (since it impelled Valero to compose fundamental and primary aspects of the paratext) but on the other turns out to be counterproductive by failing to observe any limit for the writable. It is hardly surprising that in this sense, after going round in circles, many critics end up associating Arenas with Martí, which is after all what has been done in Cuba for forty years with every writer who has acquired a name in the publishing market.

Even arguments demonstrating the *biological dimension* - which Arenas himself singled out as alien to all writing - constitute for R. Valero proof to the contrary. 'Cuento esta anécdota trivial porque es interesante destacar que Arenas tenía un amor desmedido por la aventura; el peligro lo llamaba, había una conjunción muy extraña de autodestrucción con un gran amor por la vida.' [Valero, 1994a: 47]. Consequently I find it impossible to comprehend, over and above his romantic notion about the nature of literature, this attitude from someone like Valero, who also says with reference to Arenas's last years such things as '...días en que sabíamos que estábamos solos en un mundo al que nada le importa la literatura o el arte.' [1994a, 48]. What approach could we have to that biological dimension, alien to all literature, other than that to be found in those exact words? María Badías, Valero's wife and also a friend of Arenas, heads in the same direction. 'Rey (this refers to Arenas) venía a visitarnos a menudo; creo que buscaba el calor de nuestra amistad, los frijoles negros caseros, la tranquilidad de estar con gente que lo querían no porque era Reinaldo Arenas, el escritor, sino por el sencillo hecho de que disfrutábamos de su compañía y él de la nuestra (aunque les haya dicho a ustedes lo contrario).' [1994, 24].

Arenas in a romantic historiographical tradition -which more than one critic dates back to Martí [Cabrera Infante, 1992]- where the identification between 'life' and 'work' is upheld. Nothing could be further removed from Reinaldo Arenas.

In other words, the fact that R. Arenas should have tried to define his own biography and should even have read all his *oeuvre* from his *Autobiografía* does not signify a defence of the above-mentioned romantic premise but, on the contrary, opposes it in an attempt to work out the paratext of his works. Arenas understood literature to be a work with a beginning and an end in a sense that 'vida' and 'obra' are not equal [1992, 343].⁹ And that after this end - in, let us say, 1990, having concluded the 'pentagonía' and his 'autobiography'- he should have chosen to commit suicide does not prove right those who defend this literary romanticism but rather it speaks of the absence of a biological residue- that which the biologist Jean-Didier Vincent, referring to 'the animal passion', has termed *clockwise* [Vincent, 1990 : 220].¹⁰ 'He visto un lugar remotísimo habitado por elefantes

⁹ As we will see later on in Chapter 5, one of the principles of what I have mentioned like literary romanticism, is, in fact, one identification between 'vida' and 'obra' - identification which, according to my hypothesis, is based on a misunderstanding of the relationship between auto/biographical narration and the interpretation of the books attributed to the author Arenas [see also 'The Four Reinaldos' in Chapter 3].

¹⁰ We can also read Andrea Pagni's commentary on *El mundo alucinante* from this perspective. 'Las alternativas que propone la práctica paródica en *El mundo alucinante* -tolerancia, aceptación de la disensión, cuestionamiento de verdades absolutas- tiene mucho que ver con las consecuencias que, a nivel ético, derivan los biólogos chilenos Humberto Maturana y Francisco Varela de su "visión alternativa de las raíces biológicas de la inteligencia" (Maturana y Varela 1990: 7) que, hacia 1980 constituyó uno de los puntos de partida del constructivismo radical, considerado como una "superación de tradiciones de pensamiento europeas que se han vuelto insostenibles. En la medida en que se desprende de conceptos absolutos de verdad y realidad, en que transforma la objetividad en intersubjetividad y vincula todo el saber con el hombre y sus actos, nos señala que somos los únicos responsables del mundo natural y social en que vivimos." (Schmidt 1990: 8) Maturana y Varela observan, al final de su estudio de las bases biológicas del conocimiento humano, que "cualquier cosa que destruya o limite la aceptación de otro junto a uno, desde la competencia hasta la posesión de la verdad, pasando por la certidumbre ideológica, destruye o limita el que se dé el fenómeno social y, por tanto, lo humano, porque destruye el proceso biológico que lo genera." (Maturana y Varela 1990: 209). (...) La posición de Arenas en *El mundo alucinante* no difiere mucho de la de los biólogos chilenos, y ambas tienen que ver, también, con el debate acerca de las crisis de los grandes relatos tal como lo formula la reflexión acerca de la condición postmoderna. Queda por verse hasta qué punto el diagnóstico postmoderno, la formulación de una ética basada en una descripción alternativa de las bases biológicas del conocimiento, o en la experiencia de la marginación conducirá a no promover una remodulación antiautoritaria en la que haya lugar para la

regios>, había escrito -says Arenas- hacía unos años, no muchos, cuando aún pensaba que un grupo de signos, que la cadencia de unas imágenes adecuadamente descritas, que las palabras, podrían salvarlo...' [1984a, 9]. There is in Reinaldo Arenas, to put it in Hans Blumenberg's terms, a time in life (*Lebenszeit*: a biological dimension) and a time in the world (*Weltzeit*: a scriptorial dimension, one that can be constructed) [H. Blumenberg, 1996; P. Ricoeur, 1983-85, can also be referred to on this matter].

Looking at his later works is enough in order to reach a rapid understanding of the fact that, even apart from his fatal illness -known as it was with certainty since December 1987 [R. Valero, 1992a: 29]- Reinaldo Arenas had already concluded his literary task and was only giving it 'its fatal touches' -correcting here, modifying there, fixing, once and for all, a work to which he had devoted himself, as he himself said, 'for almost thirty years' [1992, 343]. He was, according to my hypothesis, and as I will try to explain later on, constructing an image of himself as author and deciding on a bibliography or, to put it more precisely, establishing the basis for a paratext to his *oeuvre* -above all, starting with *Antes que anochezca*.

In reality we believe this 'confusion' of which R. Valero speaks not to be so in someone like Arenas, but rather to be an attitude demonstrating that auto/biographical story and bibliographical narration coincide with and complement each other. I believe that if Reinaldo Arenas learned anything in so many years of persecution and of preparation of manuscripts with no likely publisher it was exactly this: to calculate the tight space of manoeuvre between editions, the construction of the authorial figure, and production of manuscripts -which happened in Cuba to some extent by instinct, to some

diversidad. Si bien a nivel de lo explícito *El mundo alucinante* niega esa posibilidad, ella está inscrita en la práctica de su escritura.' [A. Pagni, 1992: 147].

extent for purposes of survival 'pues Cuba es un país que produce canallas, delincuentes, demagogos y cobardes en relación desproporcionada a su población' [R. Arenas, 1992, 14]. If we remove the term 'Cuba' from this evaluation it could be read as an almost perfect definition of 'literary market': we believe that if Arenas indeed suspected this on arriving in Miami in 1980, he was yet more convinced of it when his fatal illness was diagnosed. 'La diferencia,' maintains Arenas in a statement which could be significant, 'entre el sistema comunista y el capitalista es que, aunque los dos nos dan una patada en el culo, en el comunista te la dan y tienes que aplaudir, y en el capitalista te la dan y uno puede gritar; yo vine aquí a gritar.' [1992, 309].

Working within this literary environment where gossip, writing and public efficacy or failure mingle, is something that Arenas had in some way understood in Cuba. To assure ourselves of this we need only observe how, in the ten years he lived in exile, Arenas granted almost a hundred interviews and/or public appearances -from taking part as an actor in *Conducta impropia*, the film made by N. Almendros and O. Jiménez Leal, and being interviewed by Bernard Pivot in Paris, to speaking publicly in Washington's Wilson Center, not to mention a whole series of interviews which appeared in academic, literary and periodical publications of various kinds and in various languages. Discounting his diatribes against 'Fidel Castro's dictatorial regime' and his appraisals of 'the Mariel phenomenon' [L. Hasson, 1992a, and O. Ette, 1986] -there was even a magazine of this name published in New York, with Arenas as one of its mentors-¹¹ all the other interviews and public appearances turn on the nature of his work, the context in which it was produced, new versions of old works, new works in

¹¹ In this context consult the thought-provoking work of Mercedes Cros Sandoval, *Mariel and Cuban National Identity* [Miami, Editorial SIBI] and also L. Hasson 1986 and 1988.

the process of being created, and particular links between auto/biographical narration and bibliographical account. Even when he refers specifically to one of his works or interprets one of them, he only does so in order to place it within a general perspective, either of his *oeuvre* or of his idea of literature. That is to say, what we have is the fabrication of an authorial image and the establishment of a privileged bibliographical narrative or, perhaps better, a pure development of the paratext: in this sense, from the bibliographical point of view, mention of the Cuban government and its players is of little significance.

4. A leap into the future: a romantic aim ending up in a book

This bibliographical accumulation commonly known as romanticism -from Julián del Casal to Lezama Lima, passing through Jose María Heredia, Cirilo Villaverde, Ernestina Gómez de Avellaneda, Jose Martí, and other authors are as officially Cuban as they are nineteenth century- can be held to be at the heart of the literary formation of American literature in the Spanish language and also at that of the very formation of an idea of the nineteenth century. It is precisely in that historical event named 'romanticism' by narrative convention, that some critics [Acevedo, 1992, and B. Varela Jácome, 1993] situate the idea of a literary *authenticity* which, through no accident, finds its culmination in that idea of *literatura comprometida* which characterized practically the whole of the twentieth century. The same idea imposed its hegemony on every concept of literary production throughout the twentieth century -in that the construction of a political and constitutional geography had to coincide with a concept of Nation which, ideally, would also be a Republic of Letters (República de las Letras). There are not, nor have there been, many writers -Arenas is among them- who have observed critically -at the same time putting into practice this

observation in a physical manner through their writing- the close bond which exists between a certain idea of memory and history and this sense of 'authentic literature'. For the idea of legality or legitimacy, or even legacy - in a realm supposedly ruled by fiction, as is the case with literature - can only be understood by those who are searching for a 'historical truth'. And this is taken to be a truth expressed in a past which functions as the real, as 'facts' which are unquestionable, and this in a present that can only be understood by reference to that real which is 'truth memory'.

What this amounts to is that the idea of literary authenticity corresponds to the delusion -which Arenas was to call 'superstalinista' on more than one occasion- that memory can be controlled and manipulated ('bureaucratically', as Arenas called it in Cuban) just as history can, and, in addition, *that it is desirable* that this should be the case. Arenas's books are written in opposition to this view because, as Octavio Paz said, and Arenas was to quote in the first Spanish language edition of *Otra vez el mar*, 'memory is a present which never stops passing'. Therefore, any idea of literature conceived on the grounds of stable and received precepts can only ever be an illusion, always determined by the rulers (read Fidel Castro and Co.) in their desire to control all written expression, and, above all, in their wish that everything should be a document that contributes to the 'monumentalismo' that governments need. If memory has a possible writing [O. Ette, 1992], this is something that can be decided neither prior to the act of writing itself nor in accordance with rigid systems: this statement may appear banal but is less so if we reflect upon the fact that in Reinaldo Arenas one can only speak of memory in relation to the fact that it is written -in other words, *memory is writing*.¹² In this sense, therefore, the relevance

¹² From something akin to this perspective we can read in *Mea Cuba*: 'En nuestro tiempo la memoria parece haber nacido en el exilio. Joyce en Trieste recuerda a todo Dublín, Proust en su exilio de corcho recuerda toda su vida. Una de las grandes memorias de la segunda mitad del siglo ocurre cuando Nabokov

which all paratextual perspectives acquire in Arenas's *oeuvre* should not strike us as unusual, neither should we be surprised that the author himself was the first to see it in this way, dedicating practically the whole of his ten years in exile, before committing suicide, to the construction and perfecting of this paratext which every future reader will naturally imagine or which every literary critic must of necessity work through on reading and interpreting his books. In this sense, there are few cases as similar to that of Arenas as that of Borges, perhaps the best-known twentieth century writer in the Spanish language, as Arenas himself maintained [J. Barquet, 1992].

If Reinaldo Arenas, on the one hand, puts an end to 'esa lengua de despedidas que es en Cuba el español del siglo XIX (and I would add, twentieth)' [Cabrera Infante, 1992: 304], on the other hand he confirms and insists upon the idea that countries constitute a territorialization through writing rather than as a political reality -what Cabrera Infante, in order to refer to the origins of Cuba as a nation as much (and at the same time) as to literature in Cuba, called *the birth of a notion* [1992, 292 ff.]: 'La literatura cubana, qué duda cabe, nació en el exilio. Estuvo, en efecto, en el origen del nacimiento de una nación. Pero fue en realidad el nacimiento de una noción: nada tiene tanto éxito como el exilio. Hablo ahora no de Miami, sino de nuestra literatura.' [1992, 292].

For those 'committed writers' (Retamar, Barnet and Co.), opposed and reviled by Arenas in *Antes que anochezca*, literature is an object addressing a political idea whilst for Arenas politics is a poor literary fiction whose will to survive can only be understood as the obsession and perversity of a legalistic documentalism which seeks to immortalize itself through the existence of certain institutions (for which read UNEAC, Casa de las

recuerda en el exilio el pasaje y pasadizo de su memoria. El libro se titula *Habla, memoria*. Nemósine es nuestra diosa: ella es madre de las musas y de la memoria.' [Cabrera Infante, 1992: 472].

Américas, etc.) and of certain characters -there is no shortage of jokes made juxtaposing the eternity of time and the possible pharmaceutical longevity of Fidel Castro -who suppress any plurality or dissidence which does not tie in with the official outlook. Consequently, in such an environment *Antes que anochezca* can only be the working out of a proverbial assertion: 'There is no persecution mania where persecution is mania' [Cabrera Infante, 1992 : 284].

From a historiographical perspective we can define as 'romanticism' that type of literature whose reference and claims to authenticity or veracity are not found linked to a theory of writing, but rather to the construction of a principle of reality (sentimental or social). As a result, any analysis of a reality/fantasy type lacks interest here: Arenas already writes *from* a radical and materialist position (of matter and physicality, not of 'historical materialism') where writing and possible communication are one and the same thing.¹³

If what we call the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas is an innovation and a novelty it is precisely because the auto/biographical accounts and the bibliographical narration out of which, on the whole, it is constituted, work according to a theory of writing, implicit, as we shall see, in the idea of 'visual literature' put forward by Arenas. Without that theory it is not possible to understand, without recourse to the usual biographical ('vital') apology [see, for example, Soto, 1994a: 7], how Arenas produces a literature which is in effect a *para-literature* or, more correctly, a literature no longer constructed *from the*

¹³ From this point emerges, as we have already said, one of the distinctive features of the contemporaneity of what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*: if a contemporary sensibility is possible, it is physical. Curiously, in this Arenas is linked to the Argentinian poet Néstor Perlongher. What is curious lies in seeing how, if on the one hand Arenas is aligned to Borges, on the other Perlongher aligns himself to Lezama Lima. At the same time Didier Costa, French writer and translator acquainted with Arenas, works in this direction, although not dealing directly with Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* [see *Narrative as Communication*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1989].

starting-point of the writings themselves -as is thought to be normal in European terms- but rather through the public location of the same - a kind of *paratextualité* in the terms in which G. Genette sets it out in *Seuils* [1987]. *A literature of literature* -the association with Borges is inevitable- or *paratextual point of view* could be alternative titles for this aspect of Reinaldo Arenas's work, which some literary critics purport, in a more general (and often vague) fashion, to call 'postmodernity' [Béjar, 1987; and Herrero Olaizola, 1994].

5. Geographical mix-ups

My first encounter with Reinaldo Arenas took place in a Milan bookshop, in December 1992. It was as a result of *Antes que anochezca*, the newly published autobiography. There exist no memories of this event other than its location and an indistinctly recalled phrase which, it could be said, gave rise to this piece of work and to a prolonged relationship with the book: 'En los últimos años, aunque me sentía muy enfermo, he podido terminar mi obra literaria, en la cual he trabajado por casi treinta años.' [1992, 343]. It was that *I've been able to finish my literary work* which surprised me, a surprise from which emerged this idea of being in the presence of something new, something different. This suspicion, was fully satisfied and confirmed when, with pleasure and admiration, I read *Antes que anochezca*.

One finds in Reinaldo Arenas a clear idea and understanding of literary work linked to a term (*término*, *finalidad*) whose reasons, obviously, cannot be alien to the very conditions in which these works were produced and to the biographical narration which relates to them. On the same page as the previous quotation we can also read: 'Pongo fin a mi vida porque no puedo seguir trabajando.' [1992, 443]. Some people could interpret this in the

sense opposite to that in which it is being put forward. Here, I am not concerned with uchronies (ucronías) and therefore am not interested in what Reinaldo Arenas would -or would not- have done had he remained alive; what does interest me -it might even be said with a certain degree of detachment from reason and motive- is that in the biographical account which bears the name of Reinaldo Arenas and in the bibliographical narration with which he is linked, we find a feverish, it might even be said a desperate, idea of culmination, of conclusion and end.

Somehow Reinaldo Arenas, I believe, lived in an extreme fashion, through his rifts, misfortunes and illnesses, in a general condition which other contemporary creators pass through in a manner that is more disguised, less blatant: I have in mind, for example, the Argentinian writer Juan José Saer, whose opposition to the Buenos Aires literary world is softened by his living in Paris. This 'general condition' refers to a situation of scriptorial achievement and is defined from the starting-point of a biographical imagination (imagination being the act of creating images).

It is starting from this belief (so to speak) that I will explain my critical perspective: Reinaldo Arenas signals, displays the end of a whole form of experiencing literature, one could even say, the end of a whole way of experiencing art, which now no longer has any place. Reinaldo Arenas, after his fashion, tried to create a new territory for that vacuum in perception, for that lack of perceptive understanding which, as he himself typified, characterized the contemporary [Arenas, 1990b]. It is difficult and controversial to ascertain whether he succeeded or failed -one could say that these are not the correct terms to employ. I am, however, convinced of the effectiveness with which he put his *biobibliography* in order, that is to say, of the efficiency with which, in scarcely ten years he created a space for his

manuscripts and a place for his biography. And that was not all: in that same movement Arenas openly displayed the impossibility -decidedly carnivalesque- of 'making literature' in romantic terms with undertones of martyrdom ("Martí y martirios"). Between Cabrera Infante and Reinaldo Arenas there exists not, as many believe, 'a generational difference' but, rather, a century of differences. Consequently, we read *Antes que anochezca* more as a historiographical treatise [Cabrera Infante, 1992] than as an autobiography and a novel [Cabrera Infante, 1992]. *Antes que anochezca* is the definition and practical resolution of the idea of that which we call a biobibliography because it allows us to observe how an *oeuvre* can be established and ordered using an auto/biographical account.

6. Cabrera Infante and Arenas

'El juego es en fin la medida de todas las cosas.' *El portero* [Arenas, 1989a: 131]

Cabrera Infante [1992] sees Reinaldo Arenas from a biographical perspective.

Reinaldo era un campesino nacido y criado en el campo y educado por la revolución, que se concibió y se logró y casi se malogró como escritor. Muchas veces me he preguntado por qué el régimen que lo hizo, trató tanto de destruirlo. Una respuesta posible es que Arenas nunca fue revolucionario y siempre fue un rebelde, que demostró con su vida y con su muerte (<*Siccut vitae, finis ita*> decían los romanos) ser un hombre valiente. [1992, 402].

As a result, his literary appraisal of *Antes que anochezca* shouldn't surprise us:

Antes, leyendo o no pudiendo leer los libros libres de Arenas, creía que debió quedarse en Cuba y repetir los logros de *Celestino* y *El mundo alucinante*. Como otras veces, estaba equivocado: Arenas hubiera terminado siendo un prófugo de profesión, no un escritor. Para el escritor que planeó pentalogías y otros proyectos, *Antes que anochezca* es un libro en partes de difícil lectura, no por el estilo sino por el estilete. Escrito en una carrera contra la muerte, chapucero, muchas veces no ya mal escrito sino escrito apenas: dictado, hablado, gritado, este libro es su obra maestra. [1992, 404].

Perhaps it was because of this almost exclusively biographical focus that Cabrera Infante was one of the first to understand -although unknowingly- the paratextual quality of *Antes que anochezca* in considering it as a fiction, as literary writing in the strictest sense: 'Este libro suyo es una novela, que es una memoria, que es una fusión de la ficción y una vida que imitó dolorosamente a la ficción: esa realidad atrofiada que es su última fuga.' [1992, 404]. Despite this, Cabrera Infante's interpretation relies, without mentioning it openly, on this romantic bond which associates, for explanatory purposes, auto/biographical narration and literary *oeuvre*. As a result, the only appropriate title for the article might have been 'Reinaldo Arenas o la destrucción por el sexo'. In this sense, Cabrera Infante rubs out with his elbow what he had earlier used his hand to write given that, if it is true on the one hand that starting from the point of his exclusively biographical interpretation he had guided his reading of *Antes que anochezca* towards a paratextual understanding, it is equally true on the other hand that with this romantic conception of literary *oeuvre* which he applies to Reinaldo Arenas, he is discrediting exactly what strikes me as being the originality and innovation of the idea of literature which Arenas himself put (and puts) into practice.

Cabrera Infante belongs to that literary tradition which Reinaldo Arenas reaches in order to draw it to an abrupt end. '<¿Vale la pena escribir en el exilio?> Mi temida respuesta invariable era: ¿Vale la pena vivir? Para mí vivir y escribir son una sola cosa.' [1992, 473]. For Cabrera Infante there is no biographical existence beyond literature: 'Por supuesto nada mata tanto a un escritor como dejar de escribir. Aun no publicar no significa que el escritor está muerto.' [1992, 474]. Which if you believe exclusively that 'all biography always aspires to the condition of history' [1992, 315], could be an accepted argument.¹⁴ But there is in Reinaldo Arenas, I believe, a *biological dimension* -it is for this reason, as I said, that I reject any sexist or homosexual (homosexualista) interpretation of his work- which is indifferent to literature or, more precisely, to writing, which, following the lines of H. Blumenberg, we could call *Lebenszeit*.¹⁵ Referring to this biological dimension, Arenas says:

...y qué podían, las palabras contra ese terror (...), contra la realidad insoportable, otra realidad, nuestra realidad, sólo con la creación de un nuevo presente, se puede eliminar el presente presente, no con relatos, no con recuentos, no con análisis minuciosos o brillantes de lo que ha sucedido y sucede, éstos, en fin, no hacen más que afianzar, situar, justificar, evidenciar, darle más realidad a la realidad padecida...' [1984a]. Ningún libro, [continues Arenas, speaking with precision] ninguna

¹⁴ The idea of 'Vidas para leerlas' which appears in *Mea Cuba* preceding any biographical sketch is simply a proposition arising from the same precept.

¹⁵ There is in this sense an attractive passage in the *Méditations de Saint-Nazaire* which can be read as an indication of this non-written dimension of experience and perception: 'Pero he aquí que, de pronto, el tren pasa por un campo deportivo. A la luz del atardecer veo unos jóvenes, ágiles y despreocupados, saltar y lanzar una pelota en un cesto. Y esa visión es un fogonazo que me sitúa sin ninguna alternativa en el tiempo presente. Y me veo, tal como soy, un producto de los años sesenta, en el umbral ya de los tétricos noventa. Alguien que no puede identificarse, confundirse, mezclarse, aunque quisiera, y lo quiero, con esos jóvenes que lanzan despreocupados una pelota al aire y a ese acto pueden entregarse plenamente, pues en sus mentes no existe la obsesión de un sueño frustrado, de un pasado que prometía convertirse en un futuro vital y terminó en campo de concentración. Jamás yo, mi generación, los cubanos del exilio, los que venimos del futuro, los que hemos padecido y padecemos una sucesiva cadena de infamias o calamidades podremos lanzar así, tan despreocupadamente una pelota al aire; aunque lo queramos, aunque desesperadamente lo intentemos.' [1990b, 51-2]

palabra, nada podrá hacerles comprender a los que no la padezcan que el hecho de soñar o pensar resulta ridículo y peligroso en un sitio donde conseguir una lata de leche es tarea de héroes y donde tener amistad con un artista es suficiente para que te consideren un enemigo. [1982b, 180].

It is because of this that for Arenas, but not for Cabrera Infante, literature was a work with a beginning and an end: rather like a natural manifestation with its development, its apogee and its disappearance, which does not necessarily coincide with the biological dimension of the author who executes it.¹⁶ It is probably also as a result of this that Cabrera Infante interprets Arenas's illness not as a biological or personal matter, or as a matter of fortune -as, on the other hand, Arenas himself does [O. Ette, 1992]- but as a long-drawn-out suicide, whose denouement with the aid of barbiturates, in the early morning of December 7th 1990, is no more than an incident of little account.

We find in *Mea Cuba* the impossibility of regarding Reinaldo Arenas as anything other than a Cuban writer in terms of anagraphic register:

Reynaldo Arenas se suicidó en un Nueva York que de irresistible pasó a ser imposible. Era el exiliado total: de su país, de una causa, de su sexo y murió peleando contra el demonio. No ha habido un anticastrista tan pertinaz y tan eficaz. Cuando el sida no lo dejaba vivir, murió como había vivido: en guerra contra Castro. Pero su actividad política no le impidió saber que su destino cubano era la literatura y ha dejado detrás por lo menos dos novelas que son dos obras maestras. No descansa en paz sino en guerra. [1992, 194].¹⁷

¹⁶ O. Ette, referring to *Otra vez el mar*, also speaks of 'a biological or natural time' [1992, 106]. Unfortunately he does not develop this aspect nor consider it more deeply.

¹⁷ Cabrera Infante writes 'Reynaldo' with a 'y', as did for the first time an editor jeered at sarcastically by Arenas. The editor was Angel Rama, who published the book of stories *Con los ojos cerrados* [Montevideo, 1972]. Something similar happens with the Mexican edition of *El mundo alucinante* [1969], and one can observe that in most writings devoted to Reinaldo Arenas in the seventies, the spelling is 'Reynaldo'. As far as I can gather, this consecration of the error was the reason why Arenas intimate

None of this ceases to be paradoxical in a book that speaks of exiles, geographies and suicides with territorial insistence.

Cabrera Infante identifies exile with literature not only because 'la literatura cubana, qué duda cabe, nació en el exilio' [1992, 292]. But because there is for him no possibility of understanding literature other than through an auto/biographical identification:

En uno de sus textos más famosos, <Carta del Niágara> (Heredia estaba obseso con la caída de agua americana), dice el poeta en tono exclamatorio: <Oh, ¿cuándo acabará la novela de mi vida para que empiece la realidad?> Esta clase de pena es nueva [sic], del siglo XX de hecho y Sartre la llamará autenticidad: evadir la evasión. Invirtiendo la angustia un siglo y medio después, dice Severo Sarduy, otro escritor exiliado: <Quiero convertir la irrealidad de mi vida en una novela irreal.> Los tiempos han cambiado pero no la extrañeza. Esa extrañeza es el destierro. [1992, 294].

If we add to this paragraph the epigraph from Martí which opens *Mea Cuba* ('Cuba unites us on foreign soil'), we can understand to what extent Cabrera Infante belongs to that romantic bibliographical tradition so totally alien to Reinaldo Arenas as we should see later, Arenas chose to re-write Cirilio Villaverde and not Jose Martí, who had been transformed by historiographical means into a traditional and commercial symbol, of 'castrismo' and of Marxist Cuba.

friends gave him the humorous nickname; amongst them was Robero Valero. This it seems sometimes amused Arenas greatly, playing also with its homosexual connotations. One should also remember that the most famous nickname Virgilio Piñera ever had in Havana - perhaps because of this the one he most hated - was that of *Reina* [Cabrera Infante, 1992].

Of 'nueva pena', then, we find no trace there: the relationship between the nation, subject and literary production from which the ideas of 'authenticity' or 'compromiso literario' are born is as old as the nineteenth century itself or, if you like, as the Spanish American nations and their literary notions. Jose Martí's proverbial phrase: 'Dos patrias tengo yo: Cuba y la noche...' [1964, 252] spans, in this sense, every conception of literature from the nineteenth century until the appearance of the so-called 'literature of the (Cuban) revolution' in the Sixties and the start of the Seventies [Méndez y Soto, 1977; Fernández Vázquez, 1980].¹⁸ The 'Sartrean authenticity' (see Chapter 5) is not therefore alien to E. Zola's *J'accuse*, which is still of the nineteenth century, an argument not by chance agreeable to Cabrera Infante himself [see 'I accuse in the Wilson Center': 1992, 254]. This is because for Cabrera Infante, in contrast to Arenas, literature 'is nothing more than an extended epitaph' [1992, 195]; there is within this conception no room for the literary market and its dealings. For this reason, the ill-treatment meted out, for instance, by Cabrera Infante to the Spaniard Carlos Barral does not surprise us either, despite the fact that the publishing house founded and directed by the latter published the former's writings until 1979.

What Cabrera Infante does not allow is that, even if an auto/biographical narration is constructed openly, as is the case with Arenas, for example, and even more so, even if this auto/biographical narration should function as the auxiliary to a literary *oeuvre*, even in these conditions, there is insufficient reason for confusing 'life' and 'literature' unless, of course, one wishes to fall

¹⁸ It is interesting to observe how the popularization of these verses produced a distortion which accentuates the angle we are examining and in which Jose Martí appears quoting Jorge Luis Borges's *Poema de los dones*: <Dos patrias tengo yo: los libros y la noche>. It even seems worthy of one of those novelesque encounters which were one of the preferred resources of Arenas himself.

Regarding the so-called 'literature of the revolution', *Los años duros* can be consulted. This is a literary exordium written by Jesús Díaz in 1966. From a similar perspective, we have *Las iniciales de la tierra* [1987] by the same author and also the compendium of commonplaces called *Hombres de a caballo*, of the Argentine David Viñas who also received a Cuban prize in 1966.

in with the idea of an 'escritor comprometido' which has brought such benefits to the Castro regime - Reinaldo Arenas *dixit*. The construction of an auto/biography is a commercial (or paratextual) undertaking for any writer, and this Reinaldo Arenas had learned (the hard way) through local misunderstanding with UNEAC and its followers.

Leaving aside this romantic-historical consideration, it would not be mistaken to maintain that Reinaldo Arenas became a writer as far as the Spanish-speaking publishing market is concerned outside Cuba, just as Cabrera Infante suggests and as I intend to argue in the following chapters. Arenas, in this sense, establishes that *time warp* of which I spoke at the outset: 'Todos los hombres comenzando por Colón, se hicieron escritores en América...' [1992, 455]. Before 1980, Arenas' bibliography was chiefly composed of manuscripts, apart from the odd indirect publication. It was only once he had gone into exile, first in Miami and then in New York, that Arenas began to be an author, to publish the manuscripts that he had carted around so much: in other words, it was there that he began his bibliographical narration. Because of this, in this strict sense, we can apply to him the words used by Cabrera Infante of Martí: 'José Martí es un hombre hecho de prosa' [1992, 131], in the sense that both writers 'became', for literary history, the characteristics that readers attributed to their writings.

7. Arenas and paratextual martyrdoms

The paratext, says Gérard Genette, 'est sans doute un des lieux privilégiés de la dimension pragmatique de l'oeuvre, c'est-à-dire de son action sur le lecteur' [1982, 10]; and upon the structure, we would wish to add, of an auto/biographical narration. As we have already mentioned, the concern of

this work is to produce a description of *paratextualité* [Genette, especially 1982 and 1987] in the works attributed to that auto/biographical narration we call Reinaldo Arenas. More precisely, its concern will be to produce a description of the appropriate place occupied by the paratext in the description as much of the bibliographical account as of the auto/biographical one going under the name of Reinaldo Arenas - that is to say, the actual composition of that which, according to convention, we call the work of Reinaldo Arenas.

For instance, in one of the various interviews granted by Arenas [O. Ette, 1992], the interviewer started to ask about Martí, trying to put the interviewee into the position of clarifying his views on the nineteenth century writer. Arenas replied by giving a general biographical sketch of Martí:

[Martí] se creó esa figura de él mismo, del orden, de la moral, de los principios, cuando en realidad Martí -cosa que nunca han publicado pero evidentemente uno lo puede ver cuando lee su obra- era un hombre desesperado, era un hombre suicida. Incluso se dice que en varias ocasiones intentó suicidarse y vemos en su obra, y sobre todo en su poesía, una tendencia o una obsesión por la muerte. Incesantemente Martí lo que quiere es morir y de hecho el regreso a Cuba es un regreso a la muerte. Su misma muerte es un misterio. No se sabe por qué Martí va hacia donde está el ejército español cuando precisamente el mismo Maceo o Gómez le dice: “¡Usted no se mueve de aquí!”, pero él se lanza evidentemente a morir. Yo considero que Martí fue una víctima de las circunstancias histórica y geográfica. Cuando tú lees los poemas de Martí, tú ves que el hombre no soporta este clima, no soporta este ambiente, no soporta el idioma, no soporta nada, y hay un momento, cuando llega a Cuba, en que tampoco soporta aquel reglamento militar. Porque si lo soportara se sentiría bien y hubiese hecho -como el Che Guevara- un diario de campaña real. Martí lo que hace es

describir la mata de ceiba, la mata de jubabán -es toda una arboleda lo que él tiene en su imaginación y que a él lo deslumbra- no aquellos ejércitos ni los afanes políticos. Y momentos antes de morir, como después se lee en una carta donde se ve que está muy cansado y fatigado, él dice: “libertad en lo azul”. Quiere decir que para Martí elevarse hacia lo azul, hacia el cielo, hacia ese color, en definitiva, sería su liberación total. [R. Arenas in O. Ette, 1992, 86-7]

The interviewer insists on the conventional and rhetorical nature of 'Martí público'. Arenas responds by saying that 'era un hombre lleno de contradicciones [87], which amounts to not saying anything. The interviewer then offers a way out which Arenas takes: there is a nineteenth-century Martí

O.E.: Y a tí esa parte de Martí -el Martí retórico, el Martí orador, el Martí político- te parece más bien del siglo XIX mientras que el otro Martí -el de los colores, el de los *Versos libres*- te parece más actual.

R.A.: Ah, desde luego. El Martí de los colores es mucho más actual. El otro es una circunstancia histórica que ya pasó y que además representa un concepto de la sociedad, un prejuicio o una etiqueta de una época. El Martí de los colores es absolutamente actual; incluso hasta en los *Versos sencillos*- que de sencillo no tienen nada- vemos que está jugando incesantemente con los colores, que es una cosa típica de un movimiento revolucionario en aquella época que era el modernismo, para el cual los colores eran una de las cosas más importantes -y la musicalidad desde luego. Indiscutiblemente, lo que hace que Martí sea un contemporáneo nuestro era su condición humana y desesperada y humana de buscar la vida, la cosa vital, a través de imágenes de un colorido, de una manera de sentir que no tiene que ver nada con la retórica del siglo XIX. [O. Ette, 1992, 87-8]

and there is another of the twentieth century. It is interesting to see how, in this description of Martí, Arenas isolates and throws into relief auto/biographical dimensions upon the details of the work:

Por lo tanto yo creo que hay dos Martí: uno, el que él mismo contribuyó a crearse amparado por el exilio, el Martí patriota, apóstol; y aquel otro hombre desesperado, solo, envuelto en aquellos trapos horrorosos padeciendo el frío, con su deseo de suicidarse, lleno de deseos sexuales que no podía satisfacer porque Martí era un hombre de una gran soledad y que ¿no? como toda persona vital, tenía una gran necesidad sexual que no podía complimentar y mucho más en la mojigatería de aquella época. Entonces todas esas cosas indiscutiblemente las padeció Martí. O sea ese color, esa carita convencional, ese blanco y ese negro que es la imagen que nos han dado del Martí del orden, es una imagen hasta cierto punto adulterada del verdadero Martí. [R. Arenas in O. Ette, 1992: 87].

This dimension is apparently created by Martí himself: clearly Martí is thinking of himself and of the relationship between the autobiography he is setting forward as his own and the work that bears his name. Precisely because of this, from the perspective of 'visual literature' set out by Arenas [J. Barquet, 1992, 81], a 'canonized' author like Martí can only occupy a paratextual location to the extent that, as a figure of Cuba's canon of contemporary history, the author places himself in relation to it. It shouldn't surprise us, therefore, that when Arenas wished to place himself in relation to historical literature, he should have selected the figure of Cirilo Villaverde and not that of Jose Martí.

A description and reading of this interview is also useful because it is precisely here, however paradoxical this may appear, that we can observe the extent to which Arenas, despite his lucidity on the matter of the

imperative need for *paratextualité*, does not judge the consequences of much of what he himself produces in that direction. Some of what he says, for instance, suggests such questions as these:

(1)why, as we saw, choose Cirilio Villaverde and not Martí when he wished to produce an allegory of his past and of the Cuban past [1987]?;

(2)why, whenever Martí figures in one of his works, does he do so transported to another world - talking, for example, in Cuba, to Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and a whole gallery of characters both from the present day and from various historical periods [Arenas, 1991a] - and in circumstances other than those of the nineteenth century (nearly always the time of the Castro dictatorship), that is, to say that a kind of Martí emerges who has no bibliography, only a name?;

(3)why must his work have a point of contact with that of Martí? (The reason is obviously paratextual, since no kind of literary link exists between Arenas's idea of literature and that of Martí but this is not mentioned at any point).¹⁹

This interview and these opinions on 'Cuba's national poet' are also interesting because when the journalist, as was to be expected, asks him why he does not rewrite something of Martí's, he replies by saying:

Ahora estoy reescribiendo el regreso de Martí. Al final te das cuenta que al regresar Martí a Cuba ahora, en medio de todo lo que está pasando, no puede ir como el Martí del siglo XIX; va como el perseguido de ahora, una persona homosexual que tiene millones de problemas. Finalmente, después de estar allá un día decide tirarse al mar con cientos de botellas (ríe) y en cada botella tiene un capítulo de la novela que es precisamente la novela en la cual él es el personaje principal. En eso estoy

¹⁹ It is as a result of this lack of clarity in the limits of his interpretations that we prefer to speak of an instinct in Reinaldo Arenas, compared to the markedly intellectual character that the same task acquires in Jorge Luis Borges.

trabajando ahora, vamos a ver si lo termino porque entonces ya se terminaría el ciclo de la pentagonía. La imagen final de la cuarta novela sería ese momento tirando las botellas porque él quiere que su obra perdure -y la única manera para que perdure es meter un capítulo de la novela en una botella. El se tira al mar y lanza las botellas, o sea de acuerdo con la cantidad de capítulos que tenga la novela (ríe) es la cantidad de las botellas que él tira. En esta novela va pasando algo que es también un poco una cosa autobiográfica mía: el hecho de la reescritura, de siempre tener que estar escribiendo lo que tenga perdido. En esta novela, este personaje que a la vez es Martí y soy yo y es el personaje, es el cuarto personaje de la pentagonía, por una razón u otra siempre está perdiendo el manuscrito de la novela que está escribiendo, que es precisamente esta novela. La novela la comienza a escribir como unas cuatro veces en el trayecto de la novela. Pero al final, cuando él se lanza al mar con las botellas, en realidad allí pasa una cosa terrible que es que entre los tiburones y la gente que quieren irse -y que no pueden- han roído la plataforma y la isla se va. Entonces cuando él se tira, en realidad lo único que queda es él: en el lugar donde estuvo la isla de Cuba nada más queda él con las botellas, pero incluso las botellas empiezan a ser tragadas por los tiburones que están allí. [R. Arenas in O. Ette, 1992: 88]

Arenas says that he would re-write Martí's final return to Cuba (when, as we know, he would die) in order to present a character destitute of any attribute or past, someone whose condition as a ghost escapes from the condition of a political exile, someone who is himself: a kind of autobiography produced by transporting Martí - rhetorically, prudishly - to an absurd and violent contemporary present. The result, clearly, and this Arenas does not mention, will be another carnival.

These remarks about Martí which emerge during the interview allow us to observe definitively to what extent Arenas is not always able to *read* the full scope of his own literature with regard to his *oeuvre* - something he does

often and very well (cf., for instance, his opinion on the influence and relationship of film in his works [Ette, 1992: 78-79]) in relation to the works books or situations of others. 'Lo que pasa,' maintains Reinaldo Arenas trying to display, using Martí, how the *paratextualité* of a work can change the meaning of the work itself,

es que esa imagen de Martí no es la imagen que la gente quiere dar. Ni es la que convenga porque a Martí lo han canonizado. Lo peor que le puede pasar a una persona es esta canonización que han hecho con Martí por la cual ya no se puede hablar de su vida erótica, no se puede hablar de su instinto suicida. Lo único que nos queda entonces es una estatua. Por eso yo pienso que si llego a publicar esa novela (acerca de Martí sólo en parte y publicada póstumamente como *El color del verano*, cuarta novela de la llamada <pentagonía>), causaría muchas ronchas lo cual no me preocupa porque todo lo que escribo es para molestar -entre otras cosas. Porque en esta novela [a]parece Martí como un personaje que dice que sencillamente regresa a Cuba porque no puede más y que necesita ver aquellos colores y aquel campo y estar allí, o sea que en ese momento no hay nada de las cuestiones políticas. Desde luego, como todo ser humano Martí necesitaba libertad. Pero en el fondo lo político era casi algo digamos secundario comparado con su trascendencia como ser humano. [O. Ette, 1992: 88].

If one uses this interview as an example, reasons and motives can be found for Arenas to deal exclusively with the construction of a paratext (which undoubtedly includes an auto/biographical narration): the literary revision and publication of his manuscripts, and also of certain short works which complement these and the creation of a public image, aim at creating that *paratextualité* within which the author - consisting precisely, as we will see, in a narrative image that nominates, that gives names - who sustains and develops this *paratextualité* will obtain a final definition.



To put it in another way: the *biobibliographical* construction carried out by Reinaldo Arenas - even if in an inexperienced and elementary fashion- in his ten years of exile constitutes his way of creating a territory,

O.E.: Si tú tendrías que identificar la Revolución Cubana con un color, ¿cuál color sería?

R.A.: Yo no la identificaría con el verde porque a pesar de todo, yo la identificaría con un color muy escandaloso, con un amarillo muy fuerte o con un rojo, con un color que no ofrezca casi misterios, un color muy definido, muy agresivo.

O.E.: ¿Y cuál sería el color del exilio cubano?

R.A.: Bueno, yo estoy en el mundo de un exilio digamos cósmico [ríe], sí, y a la vez muy desolador. Si yo tuviera que identificar el exilio con algún color sería con lo negro. El exilio es todo como una bruma, como un negro... Pienso en el exilio como en un color único. En realidad, en el exilio -y es allí donde está el problema terrible del exiliado- es que uno no existe. Una persona en el exilio no existe, porque de hecho uno pertenece a un contexto, a una manera de sentir, de ver, a unos olores, a una conversación, a un lenguaje, a un ritmo, a un paisaje, a un color, a varios colores -y como tú te trasplantas para otro mundo, tú no eres aquella persona: tú eres aquella persona que quedó allá. En el exilio, se está sin frontera y sin asidero: está uno en el aire. Este es el problema grave del exiliado: que no tiene una identidad propia. ¿Qué tengo yo que ver con esto que me rodea ni con el vecino de al lado? Todo esto sería maravilloso si uno viene de visita, y tú sabes que existe un lugar real, que es como el imán al cual tú te integras. Al no existir esa posibilidad, uno realmente es un fantasma. Esa es la realidad del exilio. [O. Ette, 1992: 89]

Here Arenas is re-territorializing [G. Deleuze, 1991] a space - which would now no longer be either Cuba or exile - where he felt strange and insecure. It is within this perspective that one can read that invaluable phrase of *el lejano 1970*: 'el sólido artefacto de cemento y/ yeso: Martí' [1990c, 13].

8. The well-known builder of anonymities

L.H.: ¿No tenías contacto con nadie para avisarte?

R.A.: No, no había comunicación, las cartas no llegaban, la correspondencia... [L. Hasson, 1992: 48]

In 1967 Reinaldo Arenas's first and only Cuban book was published in Havana and achieved some notoriety in Buenos Aires with three (limited) editions [1968: Editorial Brújula; 1970: Editorial Centroamericana; and 1972: Centro Editor de América Latina]. In 1969, *El mundo alucinante* was published in México, an event to which we must add two further limited editions, again in Buenos Aires [1969: Editorial Brújula; and 1970: Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo] and in 1972, without the author's knowledge, *Con los ojos cerrados* was published in Montevideo. With the exception of certain short items and minor articles no other publication was made in Spanish until 1980 when Reinaldo Arenas fled from Cuba.

Let us consider: (1) that the Cuban edition of 2,000 copies, 'se agotó en una semana y jamás se reeditó' [L. Hasson, 1992a: 44]; (2) that, as was said, the edition of *Con los ojos cerrados* never reached Cuba commercially (it was, rather, of limited circulation and Arenas only found out about it once he was in exile); (3) that the Mexican edition suffered from a series of errors which Arenas was aware of and pointed out on more than one occasion (see, for instance the as yet unpublished letter in the appendix written by Arenas himself to Gordon Brotherston whilst the latter worked on the English translation of *El mundo* in the early 1970's) giving him reason later on to refuse to recognize the second [1973] and third [1978] editions of the same book from that publishing house; (4) that the circulation of Argentinian

editions of *Celestino* and *El mundo* was limited chiefly to the River Plate area;²⁰ (5) that after 1980 Reinaldo Arenas repeatedly voiced objections relating to most of these publications - a reason for him to undertake an 'official' edition of *Celestino*, in 1982, under the title of *Cantando en el pozo*. He did the same with *El mundo*, published in Caracas in 1982 which, according to Arenas himself [O. Ette, 1992] is the 'revised and complete version', as also happened with *Con los ojos cerrados* which, under the title *Termina el desfile* appeared in a new form in 1981. 'Las múltiples ediciones piratas de esta novela,' we can read in the first edition of *Cantando en el pozo*, 'y las numerosas erratas y distorsiones sufridas por su texto han motivado al autor a hacer una versión definitiva de ella. Esta es pues, la primera edición corregida, revisada y autorizada por el propio autor.' [Arenas, 1982a: 1]. Not only can this bibliographical statement be attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, but it could also be extended to all the work published outside Cuba until 1980; in exile, he would revise each of his manuscripts and books before publishing or before re-issuing any of them. If an *exemplum* were to be given of the idea of *paratextualité* in Reinaldo Arenas which we are trying to describe in Reinaldo Arenas, it would undoubtedly be this brief note on the first page of the Argos Vergara edition of *Cantando en el pozo* where Arenas not only places the edition but also establishes the foundations for what he called the 'pentagonía'. One of its possible interpretations, we could say, is that it gives some of the

²⁰ Despite this it should be underlined that the two publishing houses - Editorial Brújula and Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo - were linked to academic and intellectual circles and, in this sense, had a certain prestige. This was as much for the attempt to produce editions with a minimum of elaboration (Editorial Brújula, for example, in 1968 published *Celestino* with a cover designed by Hermenegildo Sabat) as for the critical and analytic context of the promotion of their work (Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo was one of the first publishing houses in Latin America to publish translations of European sociological works that were not strictly Marxist; on the other hand, it is also telling that Ricardo Piglia was director (at that time) of one of the collections of that publishing house. In other words, it would not be out of keeping to maintain that awareness of Reinaldo Arenas's works in the Buenos Aires ambit was strictly within an intellectual atmosphere. One could even say that at around that time R. Arenas was a 'writer of writers', as Sábato declares of Jorge Luis Borges [i.e. Sabato/J.L.Borges, 1976].

fundamental elements of what, with time, would turn into the bibliographical account of his *oeuvre*.²¹

In brief, Reinaldo Arenas's publications in his 'Cuban period', other than the 1967 edition of *Celestino antes del alba*, were brief and of a journalistic nature. They were mainly book reviews, with the odd exception: an article on Lezama from 1970 amongst them.²²

F.S. -Mientras usted vivía en Cuba -pregunta F. Soto a Reinaldo Arenas en 1987-, antes de caer en desgracia con el gobierno revolucionario, escribió artículos, reseñas y aun cuentos para *La Gaceta de Cuba* y la revista *Unión*. ¿Hasta que [sic] año contribuyó usted con escritos a estas dos publicaciones? [...]
 R.A. -Creo que los últimos que escribí para las revistas fueron prácticamente en 1969. No creo que en el año setenta publicara muchos artículos. [...] F.S. -Bueno, en 1970 sí se publicó 'El reino de la imagen'. [...] R.A. -Claro, el homenaje a Lezama. Este trabajo era cuando ya Lezama cumplía los sesenta años. Este prácticamente creo que fue uno de los últimos trabajos que yo publiqué. Después de esto vino el año 1971 con el famoso Congreso de Educación y Cultura y ahí cambió todo. En realidad le faltan algunas cosas al trabajo que fueron censuradas. Este trabajo yo lo escribí en el año 1969 pero se publica en 1970.

²¹ It should be taken into account that the unity of the 'pentagonía' is a purely bibliographical event of the paratextual order. It was Arenas who first mentioned it but in none of the books involved is there numeration, a general title, or any sequence to indicate such an association; only in *El color del verano* [1991a, 250] and in scattered form in *El asalto* are there mentions or suggestions of the other novels. It is the book-covers, the prologues, the bibliographical outlines and the interviews (as much as the later academic works) which in fact produce the 'pentagonía'. The references or repetition which are to be found in some of the texts regarding other texts would perhaps have sufficed for a 'cycle' created by the critics *a posteriori* [O. Ette, 1992] but not for a *unity*. Consider, for example, the case of Juan Carlos Onetti and the sequence of Santa María which was never considered as a unit by the author but rather as various aspects of a temporalization [see for example O. Prego and M. A. Petit: *Juan Carlos Onetti o la salvación por la escritura*, Sociedad General Española de Librería, Madrid, 1981]. One need only reflect, in addition, that all the heroes of the novels grouped together in the 'pentagonía' die systematically, *El asalto* proving the only exception. How to conceive of a *continuum* without a paratextual appeal, without a clear prevalence of the author's opinion?

²² To my knowledge until now three publications are fragments of works by Arenas himself, four are stories and sixteen are reviews. Additionally, the only publication not in book form outside Cuba which is known from this period is an anthology of stories published by Ambrosio Fornet in Chile in 1970 with the name of *Cuentos de la revolución cubana*, Editorial Universitaria, Santiago de Chile.

Escribí un homenaje a Lezama después de haber leído *Paradiso* y sus poesías completas. Ahora, yo tengo un libro donde aparece el trabajo completo. [Soto, 1990: 37]

Everything that has already been mentioned would lead us to believe that both the lack of an assured market for his work and the lack of an image of himself as an author - of a *name* - contributed in a significant way to the fact that Reinaldo Arenas, in the production of his manuscripts did not have the influence, decisive in other writers, of a public setting for his work. Arenas produced the majority of his manuscripts in Cuba and did so in a space where their public dimension never existed, except, perhaps in an underground or covert means of circulation known among friends [L. Hasson, 1992a: 47], a means which would in fact disappear after the period he spent, from 1973 onwards, in prison and concentration camps, where he entrusted the reading of his writing to practically no one from the island.

Perhaps Emir Rodríguez Monegal should be mentioned at this point. He could be said to be the only critic who systematically dealt with the works of Reinaldo Arenas before 1980 and whose most notorious publication of that period may well be the fragment of *Celestino antes del alba* with a commentary which appeared in *Mundo Nuevo* (Paris, 1968) - above all because of the implications of this, as Arenas has said on more than one occasion [see, for example, L. Hasson, 1992a and R. Arenas, 1992], not forgetting that *Mundo Nuevo* was a publication in Spanish, published in Paris.²³ In spite of everything, these academic publications did not modify

²³ Apart from this publication there exists at least four others where Reinaldo Arenas appears: in the article 'La nueva novela vista desde Cuba' [1975], in Volume II of *Narradores de América* [1974] and in the book *El boom de la novela latinoamericana* [1972]. It is however also fair to mention that in an article from 1979 on the notion of 'carnival' in 'Latin American literature' ('Carnaval/Antropología/Parodia' in *Revista Iberoamericana*), Rodríguez Monegal mentions a great many writers but Arenas makes no appearance.

It is also necessary to mention two other academic works which, while they may not possess the continuity to be observed in Rodríguez Monegal, also dealt with a relative extension of Arenas. The first was written by Alicia Borinsky in 1975 - 'Re-escribir y Escribir: Arenas, Menard, Borges, Cervantes, Fray Servando'.

significantly the situation of isolation and independence of public spaces in which Arenas produced his manuscripts according to my conjecture. Because of this it shouldn't surprise us that Julio Ortega, for instance, in *Relato de Utopía* - an analysis of 'Cuban narrative revolution' - should say, 'Lamentablemente, salvo una valiosa reseña de Eliseo Diego, es poca la información crítica, o de cualquier otro tipo, sobre Arenas.' [1973, 218].²⁴ 'En los años 70,' states Jesús Barquet on the same subject, 'cuando mi generación (nacida en los 50) se abría al mundo de la literatura, el entonces joven escritor Arenas constituía una ausencia notable en la Cuba de entonces: muchos desconocían totalmente su obra pues ésta no circulaba en la Isla y su nombre no aparecía ni siquiera como mera referencia bibliográfica en los cursos universitarios de literatura cubana.' [1994, 32]. This situation reached such an extreme that it could almost be classed - it could not be otherwise with Arenas - as 'picaresca'. Suffice it to give one example which seen today can scarcely be given credence. As we know, the first Spanish edition of *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* was published by Monte Avila of Caracas (commissioned by the editor Luis Porcel of Barcelona), in March 1980. On the back cover of this edition ('paratexto próximo', as it will be called, further on), where, as is common, a photograph of the author appeared, the following comment can be read: 'Arenas (n. en 1943), cuya primera novela *El mundo alucinante* (1969) (sic)

The second was by Gladys Zaldívar: *Novelística cubana de los años 60*, published in 1977 [Universal, Miami].

For a lengthier exposition and treatment of this matter see Appendix 1 and 2 at the end.

²⁴ We could also consider another three examples indicative of this matter. The first, called *Nueva literatura cubana* [Miranda, 1971] mentions R. Arenas in a purely superficial manner and, other than the mention of *Celestino* and *El mundo*, nothing further appears - apart from the masterly government-approved tag of 'tropical surrealism' with which he dispatches those books. Things do not get any better in the second example, a so-called *Panorama de la novela cubana de la revolución (1959-1970)* [Méndez y Soto, 1977] which scarcely mentions Reinaldo Arenas. Finally, top prize goes to *La novela cubana en el siglo XX* [Alvarez, 1980], an official publication of Letras Cubanas, which is completely ignorant of any writer who has lived in Cuba, in the twentieth century, under the name of Reinaldo Arenas. There is brief but very significant mention of Arenas in the *Diccionario de la literatura cubana* [La Habana, Letras Cubanas, 1980: p. 70] which I will refer to later.

lo había colocado entre las figuras más sobresalientes de la nueva literatura latinoamericana (sic), ha escrito además *Celestino antes del alba* que próximamente aparecerá también con nuestro sello editorial-.' This comment, I believe, giving the lie to itself, shows us a measure of the ignorance and the real lack of awareness of Reinaldo Arenas not only inside but also outside Cuba.²⁵

In 1980 itself, also in Caracas, an attractive edition of *La vieja Rosa* was published. In this publication, by way of appendix, Cristina Guzmán produced a comment including an interview with Arenas (probably dating from 1979) which, in my opinion, remains the *chef d'oeuvre* amongst all the statements and commentaries I have read to date on Arenas.²⁶ Cristina Guzmán says here, as if to dispel all doubts, 'Autor secreto, casi clandestino, de dos novelas sorprendentes, *El mundo alucinante* y *Celestino antes del alba* Reynaldo (sic) Arenas se pasea por el mundo reducido de sus hábitos como si no existiera. Nadie en La Habana parece poder o querer recordar su nombre. Menos aún su dirección.' [1980, 103]. We are not, I repeat, talking of the late Sixties: this was written and published in 1980, a few months before Reinaldo Arenas was to flee from Cuba classed as 'an unredeemable delinquent'.

The only public dimension of Arenas's manuscripts produced by himself in Cuba is in relation to the police, to the extent that 'la Secreta', as some people called the Cuban 'Seguridad del Estado', were persecutors, censors and faithful readers of his writings, be it prose, poetry, letters or, more

²⁵ Nevertheless, that extravagant and even humorous tone that is found in some of the backs and covers of Arenas's books is actually maintained even when Arenas is their author - something which was, as will be seen, frequent.

²⁶ This interview was published, before the *La Vieja Rosa* edition, in the newspaper *Diario de Caracas* [Caracas: sábado 4 de agosto, 1979, pp. 16-17].

distantly, as Arenas himself was to suggest [1992], essays.²⁷ This background is fundamental for an understanding of a statement which could otherwise pass as anecdotal: 'Nadie me conocía en Cuba como escritor, sino porque hacía las barbacoas, vendía esto en la bolsa negra, vendía las ropas.' [L. Hasson, 1992a: 56]. In this sense my hypothesis is that, if Arenas did indeed begin by trying to publish his manuscripts and make himself a 'literary space' in Havana, after prison he went off in the opposite direction, that is to say, he tried to *fabricate anonymity* which, contrary to what one might think, did not discourage him from scriptorial production but rather induced in him a kind of graphomaniac fury where he produced manuscripts with as much zeal and obsession as he used to hide and protect them from the indiscreet gaze and from Castro's police [R. Arenas, 1992: *passim*].

Reinaldo Arenas produced these manuscripts in an environment totally alien to the public, apart from the indistinct distant news from abroad telling him of the fate of his work in other languages. 'De todo eso,' Reinaldo Arenas was to repeat on various occasions 'me enteré cuando salí de Cuba en el 80.' [L. Hasson, 1992a: 48]. In other words: the public dimension of his work would have been crucial in a Spanish-speaking sphere, not only because Arenas's awareness of his work as published would have been greater - and it would surely have been more important for the purposes of literary writing - but also because Arenas's knowledge of other languages was limited, if we are to believe his *Autobiografía*, to an uncertain understanding of French [1992, 205]. 'Actualmente, ¿usted se dedica a escribir?,' asks Cristina Guzmán. 'Escribo', replies Arenas, *hago trabajos de traducciones. (...) Esas*

²⁷ Possibly the second greatest event of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* - after his 'flight' to the United States in 1980 - takes place the day of publication of all the *records* (reports, manuscripts, letters, books) that the Cuban government holds on 'ciudadano Arenas, Reinaldo -oriundo de Aguas Claras, caserío entre Gibara y Holguín'. Above all if this confirms the existence of the messages which Arenas [1992] claims to have left (for the members of State Security who regularly checked his house) every time he went out and which they gathered religiously.

Traducciones, ¿de qué idioma son?” -the interviewer persists. “Del francés. Reviso libros, cosas hechas sin un fin literario...”.' [C. Guzmán, 1980, 104]. On the other hand, the consequences of the non-Spanish publications of his work should not be read in terms of literature but as a code of biographical narration and, more specifically, as a police event: 'Al lanzar mi novela en el año 69 -una novela ya no publicada en Cuba, que sale en francés, y con la crítica de Claude Couffon en *Le Monde*- me convierto en la bestia negra del sistema.' [L. Hasson, 1992: 45].²⁸

Let us consider all these elements: the *provisional nature* of the editions, their sparse dissemination in the Spanish-speaking world, the total public unawareness of them in Cuba and also, on more than one occasion, their author's own unawareness of them. There is also the possibility that the absence of a public dimension to this work encouraged in Arenas the idea of a *total writing* of his literature - we need only to think, for example, of how some inklings of this appear already in the Sixties when, even if Arenas does not yet, strictly speaking, talk of 'pentagonías' he does, however, suggest a possible kind of cycle or of succession of stories [O. Alomá, 1967: 37] - or that the non-existence of this public dimension allowed Arenas to conceive of his literary *oeuvre* in the first instance as a *succession of manuscripts*. And, finally, there is the fact that if Arenas indeed underwent 'la persecución política por razones literarias', this would only have indirect consequences in determining his literary writing, that is to say, at the moment of establishing an auto/biography depending on the paratext. For all these reasons I consider it legitimate to propose as a hypothesis two different literary chronologies or temporalizations: on the one hand, let us say until 1980, the construction of a series of manuscripts; and, on the other,

²⁸ In fact, in the year of 1969, the Castro dictatorship had another *bête noire* and that was unquestionably Cabrera Infante. But then Cabrera Infante was not in Havana at that point.

let us say from 1980 to 1990, the construction of a public dimension to these manuscripts and to the author who created them.

Starting from this hypothesis, then, let us consider a notion of *manuscript* to describe 'the Cuban period' as far as this constitutes not only linear time [1943 - 1980] in biographical terms but also as far as it constitutes an initial region, area or space in the construction of what Arenas called 'my literary work' [1992, 343].²⁹ I will subsequently assess a later space, which I shall try to describe from the perspective of the construction of a *paratextualité* [G. Genette, 1982 and 1987].

Finally, I will attempt to show, concisely, how both spaces, from the historiographical perspective proposed by Arenas in *Antes que anochezca*, superimpose themselves upon each other and interchange tales (relatos) and stories; that is to say, how Reinaldo Arenas's 'literary *oeuvre*' turns into an exemplary exercise of a specified *literary project* - recognizable, given the case of Jorge Luis Borges - through a particular type of paratextualization. The latter consists not only in the establishment of a bibliographical narration (i.e. a narrative which places the books in a particular order and thus proposes a given interpretation) but also in defining the corresponding auto/biographical account, in the sense of the author's life story as, similarly, an interpretative stance. [see 'The Four Reinaldos' in Chapter 3]. If Reinaldo Arenas was in any way original, it is undoubtedly in this aspect of his work starting from which he constructed, which I will call, in order to

²⁹ O. Ette [1992] posits an idea of cyclical space and of linear space in Arenas's works but is unaware of any paratextual reading, so his analysis ends up being a commentary on the literary value of the plots which follow each other or are superimposed in Arenas's various books, with the added concept of *transtextualité* so admired by literary critics [see also Solotarevsky, 1993]. A vague notion of the relationship between auto/biography and bibliographical account appears, but is only stated and not developed.

call it something, his own literary legitimacy, terms which can be used to summarise his 'weight' within the literary scene.

9. The end of a literary vision

'Mira, yo te voy a decir la verdad: a mí me gusta la literatura como una parte de la vida, pero si a mí me condenaran a ser solamente escritor, no escribiría.' [C. Guzmán, 1980]. In this unanswerable statement made by Reinaldo Arenas we can assess not only the notion of the literary as a written work, as an objective, but also some of the statements made by Arenas regarding exile in *Antes que anochezca*. In this sense it is crucial, in order to locate Arenas's precise originality, to keep in mind this evolving conception of what is literary. 'Entonces,' asks the interviewer, 'no se siente escritor?' 'No, yo no me siento. Hay momentos en los cuales me siento un escritor, por esa condición un poco fatal, intrínseca de que uno escribe. Pero no me siento, como creo existe en Europa, un individuo serio, de gabinete que escribe y que siente y piensa todo el día como un escritor. Yo creo que el caso de América Latina es distinto.' [C. Guzmán, 1980: 105]. And also: 'A mí me molesta estar hablando de literatura, me aburre, muchacha. La mejor literatura es un buen libro, lo lees y ya está. Hay miles de cosas que son literatura y no están en los libros.' [C. Guzman, 1980: 108].

Consequently this idea of literature is in part linked to that isolation by which Reinaldo Arenas's 'Cuban period' is chiefly characterized. Of course it is not suggested that such a situation was voluntary but that the notion of literature, already outlined by Arenas by then, stood in direct relation not only to the absence of publications and of being considered locally as an author - an absolute absence - but also to a general condition of isolation

which I believe Arenas turned from something unfavourable into something productive.

Yo he visitado -claims the interviewer- *algunas librerías y me he dado cuenta de una cierta escasez de títulos. ¿No le hace falta la posibilidad de leer lo que se escribe actualmente en el resto del mundo, sobre todo en América Latina?* -No sé, me imagino -responde Arenas- que sí. Quizás esos libros están en Casa de las Américas. Yo no voy mucho por allí. A veces para uno no es fácil encontrar todo el material que busca. Con excepción hecha de Du Seuil, yo no sé nada, por ejemplo, de lo que ha sido publicado de mi obra en el exterior. El otro día una escritora norteamericana me trajo una edición de *El mundo alucinante* de Penguin Books. Yo no sabía nada de eso. Me supongo que hasta un poquito se podía cobrar. Figúrate, cobra hasta el que hace la portada, ¿por qué no el que escribe? Yo creo que en estos momentos eso empieza a estar mejor, pues acaba de salir la ley de derechos de autor. La editora francesa me pagó el contrato por la traducción al francés y ellos siguieron luego vendiéndolo: hay ediciones alemanas, parece, y hasta en japonés. [C. Guzmán, 1980: 111].

At the root of this task of bibliographical design, which is one of the strategies for the production of *paratextualité*, one undoubtedly finds not only the pursuit of anonymity but also, more specifically, the conception of a public sphere distinct from personal space, which is immediately perceptive, *what one can see every day* [C. Guzmán, 1980: 105].

Piense, sin embargo -suggests C. Guzmán-, *en García Márquez, que tiene, además, la profesión de escritor de éxito.* - No, yo no podría -Arenas says- soportar eso. Hay quizás un escritor, que es ese que la gente conoce, que publica libros, y otro, que es para mí el verdadero, que está en su casa escribiendo. Porque si uno se toma en serio esto de ser escritor yo creo que nunca se escribiría nada interesante, no habría temas. Se convertiría en una especie de burócrata. La vida está

esencialmente en lo cotidiano, en lo que uno puede ver todos los días. En lo que puede ver como una persona más, independientemente de que luego uno lo transforme, lo trascienda y le dé otro significado, pero es así... [C. Guzmán, 1980: 105].

It is from here, from this perspective, that my principal hypothesis needs emphasising: the development of a public sphere affects and modifies scriptorial activity. Through his own choice and through a series of circumstances, many of them grotesque, Reinaldo Arenas found himself in the position of producing an entire literary *oeuvre* without having to negotiate or deal with this public sphere - at least, not until 1980, a date by which all his more important manuscripts had already acquired an almost definite form. What remained to be done, in fact, was not only to make them public but also *to negotiate* that treaty with the public sphere where Reinaldo Arenas would no longer be the neighbour in Old Havana who sells wood for barbecues but an author, an exile, an anti-Castroist and a homosexual.

The visibility of the idea of literature proposed by Arenas [O. Ette, 1992] can then be understood to have a double meaning: on the one hand, scriptorial fabrication of images of books, of authors, of bibliographies, of characters of the literary, what M. Bakhtin, amongst others, called literariness [Tveztan Todorov, 1966]; and on the other hand, a creation which annuls, *renders useless*, puts an end to the notion of 'una creación poética'. The latter term appears here and there, as much in *Orígenes*, in *Juventud Rebelde*, in *Granma*, as in *El Caimán Barbudo* - linked not only to a fantastic final cause, in Aristotelian terms, but also to an extravagant and futilely nihilistic finalism joining 'life' and 'literature'. What Reinaldo Arenas attempts to achieve, through the working out of a *paratextualité*, is

the description and placing of this visibility to create not so much 'a literary lense' as the very act of seeing, to take scriptorial activity to its very limit of disappearance and impossibility, that is to say, where what is perceived now has not yet found name or word. 'Porque algo que a mí,' says Arenas, 'siempre me ha preocupado en la literatura es que yo quisiera que la literatura sea visual, que la gente pudiese ver lo que está pasando y ya no solamente leerlo.' [O. Ette, 1992: 81]. Visibility therefore does not seek a reading but rather a vision or, to put it more precisely, Reinaldo Arenas places in his narratives - from *noveletas* to auto/biography - presuppositions [U. Eco, 1979], whose *lector in fabula* or, more precisely, 'lettore modello' [Eco, 1979 and 1994] will no longer really be a reader but a *seer*.³⁰ Leaps, interruptions, interstices, suspensions, pauses, accelerations, temporary abandonments and an obsessive pursuit of descriptions *inside a mobile and imaginative nucleation* (read 'imago' in Lezamian terms), are the elements in *this* seer's itinerary, which he fulfills in an experience of bookish reading - or, at least, they are that for the *lector in fabula*, who, as has already been noted, we find defined in the narration itself.

³⁰ It is in from this perspective that a contemporary etiology of the perceptible and its affectivity can be specified. In this strong resemblances can be found between Arenas and the dead Argentinian writer Néstor Perlongher. Néstor Perlongher's 'neobarroso' and Arenas's visual literature undoubtedly have much in common on this point. We can compare, for example, the 'historical' descriptions taking the form of images of *Austria-Hungría* [1980] with the visual descriptions of *El mundo alucinante* or *Otra vez el mar*. Perlongher, like Arenas, was not trying to capture a reader who believed in representations of the past but a *veedores* who could construct the past through images of a narrated present.

Chapter 2

1. Ette, the lost conjuring act

As Ette maintains, 'la obra de Arenas puede comprenderse entonces como una inmensa máquina narrativa que simula el funcionamiento de la memoria humana, dirigiéndose contra su misma condición, la escritura.' [1992, 128].

The thesis proposed in this document is the exact opposite: if any form of memory can be referred to, with reference to Arenas's *oeuvre*, it is inextricable from the idea of writing itself - and we believe this to be not only an accurate account of the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, but also a view proposed more than once by Arenas himself. What we have here is a theory of knowledge, which amounts to a theory of writing but not sensibility:³¹ this is perhaps one of those few areas where Arenas's idea of literature and that of José Lezama Lima coincide [see Lezama Lima, 1957, 1958 and 1977; and also Emilio Bejel, 1994].³² To confuse, a character's *biological dimension* - alien, as we have said, to any form of writing - with the working of memory, is commonplace in the the majority of criticism written on Arenas.

O. Ette differentiates thus between writing and memory: 'Contrariamente a la escritura, la memoria no es un almacén de datos.' [1992, 128]. This

³¹ "Sensibility" will be considered, in the first instance, as equivalent to <sense perception> and, secondly, as an indication of a <sentimental world> [feelings, affections, etc.].

³² I shall return to the (idea of) discontinuity between sensibility and thought in which the *contemporaneity* of R. Arenas's literary conception can be placed.

attitude I believe, is at the antipodes of the work attributed to the name of Reinaldo Arenas. This kind of attitude is surprising, especially given that Arenas himself, on more than one occasion (above all in *Antes que anochezca*) demonstrated that not only did a manuscript begin to exist once it could be taken off the island of Cuba, but also that the past could only be understood, in cognitive and expressible terms, in a biographical or literary manner, that is to say, *in a narrative manner*. In other words, if there is a biological dimension which eludes written expression, it is alien to all communication and has no possible name [see particularly Arenas 1990b, 1982b and 1992]. It is consequently obvious that, as O. Ette affirms, 'el pasado no es algo terminado y fijo sino qué <vive> a través de su integración deformadora o de su readaptación al presente.' [1992, 128]. There is no possible past outside literature or, rather, no scriptorial activity which does not clearly culminate in the biological existence of the author, to whom a given work is attributed. In order to understand this idea of literature, which Arenas quite deliberately termed *literatura visual* (see also 'Arenas and paratextual martyrdoms' in Chapter 1), one need only, for instance, read carefully Arenas's views on J. Martí [O. Ette, 1992].

Certainly O. Ette neither highlights nor distinguishes the construction of an author or of a paratext, or comments on the dimensions which both these issues assume in the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas. Presupposing a series of notions such as 'intertextuality' and 'intratextuality' - which never appear clearly but only as elliptical quotations at the foot of the page - O. Ette even goes so far as to suggest a 'rebelión aporética (sic) contra el libro, contra el texto escrito' [1992, 128], clearly analysing the content of the plots appearing in Arenas's books. Nothing could be further removed from Arenas who, according to my hypothesis, constructed an idea of literature starting with the constant use and manipulation of a theory of writing which is at the

core of all possible perceptive knowledge and reliable communication. Beyond writing there is nothing to be found in this narrative called Reinaldo Arenas: only a biological dimension, an understanding of which Arenas himself believed to be impossible and futile. In other words, if such a thing as 'literature' exists, there is a need to point out, to distinguish, that bordering space where that which has no name, that which is pure biology and will become knowledge (for which read writing) begins to become clearer, to be discernible. Because of this, Arenas used to refer with certain regularity to a passage from Azorín which he took as a literary principle :

...hay una cosa que es esta especie de -como diría Azorín- la fragancia del vaso: el vaso está vacío pero hay como una fragancia, un perfume. Porque si no hay este carácter de misterio -de esa cosa imaginativa, esa aureola que va más allá de la misma realidad evidente, y esa especie de dejar las cosas como en un carácter indefinible, que las cosas no sean completamente encasilladas en un término- entonces [mi libro] perdería mucho. [O. Ette, 1992: 79].

The lack of distinction between writing and memory is not the result of a process which apparently - as O. Ette suggests - occurs progressively in the works of Arenas taken as a whole but, on the contrary, is found at the core of Arenas's very idea of literature. Consequently, if the idea of a 'narrative machine' [1992, 128] proves to be of interest, the suggestion of 'memory simulation' is quite disconcerting. What is being simulated? Arenas does not simulate memory, he *manufactures* it. The following statement can be analysed in a similar manner, '...Arenas posee un modelo narrativo poderoso para transformar esta realidad, con el que sabotea la separación entre historia y ficción, entre literariedad y oralidad, entre escritura y memoria.' [Ette, 1992: 130] Sabotage? Sabotage of what? Arenas simply *starts* from this conception, a non-distinction between writing and memory, to begin with,

and puts it into play. And if the 'autor cubano *liquida* la separación entre escritura y oralidad (sic)' [Ette, 1992: 128], he does so starting from his own idea of literature, which is a scriptorial perspective, as a place of vision not the result of anything previous. This is in all likelihood the meaning of that 'fiebre de la escribidera' which had already appeared in *Celestino antes del alba* [1982a, 136].

O. Ette also speaks of 'oral texts' (sic) or, rather, of an apparent division, never explained or justified, between 'literary texts' and 'oral texts' as 'different shapes of the novel' [1992, 129]. Whatever method is employed to analyse Arenas's books, one does not find in his work (even in the auto/biographical narrative which surrounds it) any sense of the literary which does not place scriptorial activity itself as the nuclear point of reference. As a result, O. Ette's final thesis seems confused and contradictory. 'La ruptura de esta distinción entre literariedad y oralidad es una fuerza básica motriz del <deseo narrativo> de toda la obra de Arenas. Pero esta liquidación de la separación es también la *licuefacción* de la memoria en la escritura. Una licuefacción <que no termina nunca de pasar>, que inscribe, siempre de nuevo, el pasado en el presente.' [1992, 129]. Or it can seem even more incomprehensible if we consider the following paragraph as an initial analytical perspective on Arenas's works (as does O. Ette): 'En nuestro acercamiento, tratamos de comprender la obra de Reinaldo Arenas a partir de sus estructuras inherentes como de sus vinculaciones extratextuales.' [1992, 132]. This particular type of consideration renders even more incomprehensible the absence in O. Ette's study of any serious and fundamental consideration of a paratextual space. For this reason, when Ette affirms that: 'el *trabajo textual* (...) es un juego intencionalmente provocado aunque no totalmente controlado por el autor' [1992, 110], the only explanation he finds is to shift the matter to a vague and imprecise

reader. 'Los textos, como sus protagonistas muertos y vivos, pueden sustraerse a la dominación del autor y comenzar un juego textual cuyo testigo y medio será el lector.' [1992, 110]. And nothing changes by suggesting the existence of an unforeseeable author-reader. But much would change if Ette were making reference to and developing a *lettore modello* [U. Eco, 1979 and 1994]. This last case would inevitably lead him to consider (or to reconsider, if one prefers) the position occupied by *paratextualité*.

O. Ette maintains that 'la condición del escritor, para Arenas, está continuamente amenazada. El análisis de sus obras me permite nombrar al menos dos amenazas. Por un lado (cf. *Otra vez el mar*), la escritura está cercada por la espontaneidad de la *palabra viva* -que significaría el silencio de la escritura. Y por otro lado (cf. *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*), la escritura está amenazada por el *acto* -que también equivaldría al silencio de la escritura.' [1992, 129]. O. Ette makes no distinction between the dimension of a novel's narrative, the bibliographical story where it is inscribed and the auto/biographical narrative with which it is concerned. Because of this he awards *Otra vez el mar* the status of a proposal, that of the existence of a supposed 'living word', never expressed in these terms by Arenas, which is significant given that he produced four versions of this work.³³ As far as 'la escritura está amenazada por el *acto*', we can say that in Reinaldo Arenas any form of event or happening is such only if it acquires narrative form (or, more exactly, scriptorial form). The type of pure action to which O. Ette refers has no connection with literature. It is situated in what could be called Arenas's biological dimension and, in this sense it is worth considering the hypothesis of Flora María González [1990] that 'la literatura

³³ In fact, there are five manuscript versions - to be found in Princeton University's Reinaldo Arenas Collection - the final draft included.

de Arenas puede considerarse como una creación a partir del silencio.' [see also Chapter 4 (sections 4 and 8), Chapter 6 (section 9)]. Ette's comment also serves to show why the past cannot be considered as a constant form of the present in terms of Arenas, as the author himself proposed [see 1990b, and also E. M. Santí, 1984]. In a universalist tone, O. Ette declares that '...la escritura tiene que ser siempre revisada, renovada. En esta reactualización del pasado, del saber, consiste el funcionamiento de la memoria humana.' [1992, 129]. On the contrary, in Arenas's books and in his literary thinking not only does the present never cease to happen, and thus impose immediate limits upon writing, but any idea of the past is a kind of future realization, and vice versa - in Arenas's scriptorial activity the future is something that is resolved in the narration of the present, in the sense of a registration of the immediate and actual in which all that is knowable of the future is implicit. This is exemplified by the idea of 'presente presente' in *Arturo, la estrella mas brillante* [1984a, 51]. The resolution of this, so to speak, is not to be found, as O. Ette and the majority of literary critics hold, at the level of idea or of historical meaning, of expression of reality or fiction, but rather very much the opposite, at a level of gnosis and perception where what emerges is a space of conflict when what can be written and what cannot is decided. I believe the poetry of the Argentinian Néstor Perlongher shares with the *oeuvre* of Arenas, this definition of scriptorial activity. It is no coincidence that Perlongher proposes a *territorialización rioplatense* via, among other things, a creative reading of Lezama, who Arenas used in a similar way: 'Lezama era esa persona que tenía el extraño privilegio de irradiar una vitalidad creadora; luego de conversar con él, uno regresaba a casa y se sentaba ante la máquina de escribir, porque era imposible escuchar a aquel hombre y no inspirarse. En él la sabiduría se combinaba con la inocencia. Tenía el don de darle un sentido a la vida de los demás.' [1992, 109]. Obviously when Arenas speaks of 'Lezama', we understand him to be a

historiographical personage. One could say that 'the present present' in this sense converts Reinaldo Arenas into an incessant builder of what Reinhart Koselleck calls a *horizon d'attente*: 'L'orizzonte si riferisce a quella linea dietro la quale si chiude, in futuro, un nuovo spazio di esperienza, che peraltro non è ancora visibile.' [1986, 306].

What I wish to highlight is, above all, that, independently of any disagreement with O. Ette's thesis, it is not possible to form a general concept of writing based solely on plot analysis. Arenas was not writing treatises on literary criticism but rather books which were published principally as novels. If one addresses his idea of the limits of what can be written, then, one surmises, the *paratextualité* within which his books operate would be of far greater significance than the books themselves, because the paratextual vestibule to the texts would offer precisely that aura of a full representation of the world which Arenas's writing itself refuses. Or, it might be said more precisely, that one should attempt to ascertain why Arenas's scriptorial activity, clearly discernible in his books, reclaims as an *ab initio* condition a space never encountered in the book itself, but rather in the *sceneggiatura* and in the *costrutto culturale* - to use U. Eco's terminology [1979] - mentioned in the Introduction of this study, and, in the specific case of Arenas, indicated by an auto/biographical narrative.³⁴ I believe this outward movement is necessary to start the escape to another space, the *search for another physical state*, the idea of constantly undertaking the construction of a territory *altrove*, all of which characterize the reading of Arenas's work. Neither is it strange in this context that the only work in some way to have guessed at and approached this matter should be that of the unfortunate Roberto Valero. He was a true paratextual

³⁴ We will return to this idea in the last part of the work. Suffice it for the moment to mention that Eco maintains that 'un mondo possibile e un costrutto culturale' [1979, 130] and that 'una sceneggiatura e sempre un testo virtuale o una storia condensata.' [1979, 80].

collaborator of Arenas (the first important bibliography of the author, for example, was a work of his, carried out in collaboration with Arenas himself)³⁵ and a kind of *ghostwriter* of certain writings (the case of *El asalto* being already well known),³⁶ a position in which, as we shall see, there were to be found other figures such as Eliseo Diego, Virgilio Piñera and L. Hasson himself, who (along with Margarita Camacho) 'corrected' the manuscript of *Antes que anochezca*. Consequently, returning to the focus on plot around which the analyses of the literary critic O. Ette actually move, it

³⁵ In this regard O. Ette says at the beginning of what he calls a 'bibliografía areniana', 'Esta bibliografía está basada fundamentalmente en la labor bibliográfica de Roberto Valero que no solamente pudo aprovechar, en un primer momento, la ayuda de Enrico Mario Santí sino también la colaboración activa de Reinaldo Arenas que, pacientemente, revisó la bibliografía hasta poco antes de su muerte.' [1992, 179]. On the other hand, in 1989 R. Valero had already produced a piece called 'Una mirada unificadora de la obra de Reinaldo Arenas' which, if not the first public writing (the article was originally published by *El Universal* in Caracas) was at least one of the first to consider Arenas's books as a totality, as *oeuvre*. A year earlier in 1988, he had already practically completed his doctoral thesis - well-known to all 'Arenistas' - on love and desolation in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* (this work would even win the 'Letras de Oro' prize [1989], which is perhaps the best-known literary award amongst 'Cubanistas' in exile in the United States).

³⁶ It is worth underlining that, despite living in New York, R. Valero assiduously maintained contact with Arenas [Arenas, 1992; M. Badias, 1994; R. Valero, 1992a] and that additionally R. Valero, unlike Arenas, was trying to place himself workwise in the North American university ambit. In fact his book *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas* [1991] was originally called 'Humor y desolación en la obra de Reinaldo Arenas' [1988] and was his doctoral thesis at Georgetown University. What I wish to say is that R. Valero was undoubtedly of great use to Arenas in terms of minor information, some relevant academic contacts (especially by the end of the eighties when Arenas became virtually isolated from the American academic community) and above all discussion relating to decisions in terms of the North American Spanish-speaking academic world. That is to say, he was of use to someone who, like Arenas, was trying to make a name for himself, and to this purpose tried to use links with universities and institutes engaged with Latin American literature (even when he had bitter disputes with various university teachers), and particularly of use to someone who did not tend easily to trust in anyone.

R. Valero's situation regarding Arenas in the United States is undoubtedly very similar to that of Lilianne Hasson in France (although L. Hasson was unquestionably in a more advantageous situation than Valero). She was not only linked to the Université de Paris but had also known Reinaldo Arenas since the late sixties, as had also Jorge Camacho (and his wife Margarita) who practically became Arenas's European agents while he was in Cuba: 'La confianza, que nunca se desmentirá,' said Hasson referring to Camacho's relationship with Arenas, 'se concreta el mismo año en las gestiones de Camacho en París, y cuaja el 14 de julio de 1972, al firmar Reinaldo un poder a Jorge Camacho para encargarle sus derechos de autor y sus contratos editoriales. A pesar de la distancia, Camacho fue uno de sus mentores, iniciándolo en el surrealismo, en la literatura francesa de nuestro siglo: gracias a él descubre a Lautréamont, y a Jarry, a Artaud y a Breton.' [Hasson, 1994]. Nevertheless it must be borne in mind that both L. Hasson and the Camachos lived in Europe and not in the United States. Returning to the 'Cuban period', taking the differences into account, a similar function, although less public and academic, was carried out by Eliseo Diego and Virgilio Piñera in the sixties [D. Prats, 1996], and also by Prats himself [see Arenas, 1991b: 5]. On the other hand, it is strange and paradoxical that R. Valero should be one of the few people close to Reinaldo Arenas who did not have a chapter in *Antes que anochezca* dedicated to them - a last mercy? Will that keep in the shade another recognition similar to that carried out regarding Virgilio Piñera and the writing of *Celestino*? To reach a definite conclusion along this path would be difficult. Roberto Valero died, so I was informed, in 1994.

is understandable that he should maintain that 'En nuestro acercamiento, tratamos de comprender la obra de Reinaldo Arenas a partir de sus estructuras inherentes...' [1992, 132]. It is less so, however, that he should add '...como de sus vinculaciones extratextuales.' [1992, 132] - an extratextuality which, it must be said, Ette always identifies as a simple biographical narrative (together with a vague allusion to Julia Kristeva).

Referring to Reinaldo Arenas's books, O. Ette speaks of 'ideologization' [1992, 132] and of a supposed 'political message'. I believe such perspectives - which, in any case, are always vague - lack interest and relevance. One should not confuse (which is not to say that one should not connect) the elements of fable constructed by Arenas and the use he makes of these, whether this be with reference to a particular book or to auto/biographical narrative in general. In other words, leaving out the political oppression suffered in Cuba (an event which, according to Arenas himself, cannot be written), the only situations to be found in Arenas are those of the elaboration of fables. Analysing *Antes que anochezca* in particular, it could be said, for example, that Fidel Castro is not the visible head of the Socialist Republic of Cuba but rather a fictional character playing the role of dictator on a Caribbean island and also that Lisandro Otero is not (or will not be, one should say) an officialist intellectual of the Castro regime but a historical figure who, while describing Generals on horseback, was a police informer in Havana in the seventies and eighties. In this sense, when O. Ette states that 'su concepción estética significaba en Cuba una evidente toma de posición, distinta de las concepciones y metas artísticas formuladas por las instituciones revolucionarias en Cuba. Esta toma de posición estética incluía una posición política que, según cierta lectura <oficial>, era <contrarrevolucionaria>.' [1992, 132], he is not actually saying anything which could not be attributed (regionalisms apart)

to an innumerable host of characters who inhabit the historical narratives of what Europeans call the 'twentieth century'.

With regard to this supposed 'ideologization', what Reinaldo Arenas is in reality doing, is to make use of elements already taken into account in other narratives, of which Villaverde, Martí and Castro are the clearest examples, or, more exactly, narratives which already have a meaning determined as *costrutto culturale* [Eco, 1979], starting from which he then elaborates a *reterritorialization* of Cuba. He takes no 'political' aspect into account, instead literally (and literarily) handling a fable in which these characters are often inverted (and mistreated) in the meanings within which they are considered in the *costrutto culturale* which, if we are to find some way of expressing it, is both a literary field [Bourdieu, 1992] and a cultural market [García Canclini, 1992].³⁷ The *géophilosophie* spoken of by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari [1991] can be used in relation to Arenas's *oeuvre* as a diagram of the inversion and modification produced not only at the level of what the plot says but, more importantly still, at the level of the design of an imagined territory ('Cuba', let us say) arranged historiographically.

It is in this sense that *paratextualité* - as space, as area - acquires dimension and relevance over and above any literary analysis. After what is known as 'Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*', the island of Cuba will never again be seen in the same light : in order to be acceptable our description must also reveal this situation in which a 'literary project', when operational, radically modifies the manner of perceiving a series of things and objects. It could be said that Reinaldo Arenas represents, in this sense, a leap forwards (and one that is, in many cases, into the void): a leap not only towards another territory but

³⁷ In other words, *from* the perspective of what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, Fidel Castro is less important as a real and living tyrant than as a *character* in a framework where repression, authoritarianism and violence are fundamental parameters.

towards that idea, that dimension where the succession of territories - the evaporation of 'events' in terms of *Granma*, for instance, or the disappearance of time in terms of the 'historical reality' of Casa de las Américas - will be the norm and the basis. This new elaboration of territories is what I called the *search for a physical state*, not only in the sense of the construction of another island but also the creation of its objects, material elements and, in addition, an emotional perception, although it is well known that this cannot be written.³⁸

Ette declares that 'hacia finales de los años sesenta y principio del setenta se reduce la <autonomía relativa> del campo literario. La <lectura oficial> de un texto literario resulta ser una lectura política frente a la cual la literatura tiene que reorientarse o callarse.' [1992, 133]. This description can, to a certain point, be taken as an abstract extracted from what is set out in *Antes que anochezca*. And then he adds : 'El silencio, entonces, significaría la derrota definitiva del autor.' [1992, 133]. This is a conclusion which appears as though it should be found at the antipodes of Arenas's work since not only, as maintained by Flora M. González [1990], does his writing emerge 'a partir del silencio' but also Arenas, as we have already seen and shall continue to see, proposed a strategy of anonymity. The 'grito, luego existo' [1986a, 14 and ff.] set up by Ette as proof of this 'final defeat of the author', should in reality have been set within an auto/biographical perspective or, more exactly, within the construction of an auto/biographical narrative *through* which a bibliographical account is being ordered.

O. Ette's book undoubtedly was and remains indispensable for anyone wishing to approach the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, but each and every one

³⁸ If there is a *sensibility* which dominates Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* I believe that it can only be accepted and understood within that framework.

of the objections set out to his thesis indicates a tendency, which could be identified more extensively in university literary criticism about Arenas. This tendency consists in taking a series of notions - memory, history, fiction, etc. - as the consequence of a literary process, when, in fact, they are to be found at the very source of the idea of writing and of the *lo literario* enacted by Arenas, who first produced his manuscripts and then gave them *public positionality*. This inversion of terms which O. Ette appears to effect in his analysis may be called *illusionism*, being simultaneously illusion, thaumaturgy and sleight-of-hand.

At this point the similitude between Borges's work and that of Arenas can be highlighted by referring to the *intuition* that distinguishes Arenas. What is common to these two writers (a particular attitude to memory as writing), was in Arenas's case already visible in the manuscripts and in his public literary stance from the Sixties, none of which was part of a preconceived plan, but rather the result of a gradual evolution which led from a few spatial intuitions of origin to ideas of a historiographical type.

With this in mind, it is possible to take into account Ette's biographical description of Arenas. Firstly, regarding the 'Cuban period':

La exclusión de las obras literarias del canon oficial de las letras cubanas, hasta el silencio absoluto impuesto al autor, se funda pues en la posición estética de Arenas en el interior del campo literario cubano. Las polarizaciones ocurridas dentro de este campo hacia finales de los años sesenta y a inicios de los años setenta en Cuba, con la imposición absoluta de las normas estéticas consideradas <revolucionarias> (cf, Casal 1971; Rodríguez Monegal 1975), llevaron a una marginalización y radicalización de este autor cubano. [1992, 133].

And secondly, with reference to his exile in the United States :

Con la salida de Arenas por el puerto de Mariel, no cambió mucho su relación con el campo literario cubano; la diferencia fundamental consistía en el hecho de que sí podía publicar sus textos ahora, en el exilio. Estos textos se relacionan íntimamente con el campo literario cubano que desde mediados del siglo XIX está dividido en una literatura radicada en la isla, y en otra escrita fuera de Cuba. Esta situación se encuentra literariamente elaborada precisamente en la *Cecilia Valdés* de Villaverde, novela que no por casualidad fue reescrita por Arenas; la obra areniana se inscribe en esta tradición. [1992, 133].

To repeat, provided we place both of these descriptions alongside the objections previously set out, we could use them as a backdrop for the spatial distinction which I proposed as a conjectural starting point for considering Arenas's bibliographical narrative (see above section 8 of Chapter 1).

2. The Market and The University

“En el mundo en que vivía (y tal vez en cualquier mundo) no había espacio para que él pudiese ser feliz sin hacer desdichadas a las personas que él más amaba. El precio que tenía que pagar por ser él mismo era tan caro que tal vez lo mejor era renunciar definitivamente a ser él mismo y ofrecerse a los demás tal como ellos querían verlo.”
El color del verano [Arenas, 1991a: 110].

This paratextual transaction and handling - the result, as has been said, not of a plan but rather of a series of actions, intuitions and tastes which were gradually being defined and had reached their culmination in *Antes que anochezca* - are sometimes muddled up with an idea of a writer suitable for the market, as if commercial success and paratextual transaction should

necessarily coincide. Fashioning the paratext of a work is one thing; obtaining a publishing or economic outcome is another and very different one.³⁹ Despite some undoubted financial advantages, I believe that Reinaldo Arenas's links with the university world should be read from this perspective.⁴⁰

As Jesús Barquet maintains,

las constantes peleas de Arenas no sólo con sus conocidos sino también con aquellos que de cierta manera tenían algún control o influencia sobre el mundo editorial y académico y que, al parecer, le fueron cerrando las mismas puertas que una vez le habían abierto, nos hablan de un hombre que hizo de su original individualidad y 'necesidad de libertad y de su permanente rebeldía ante toda fijeza, seriedad o injusticia, un baluarte que estaba por encima de sus conveniencias sociales (y en su caso, por ejemplo, editoriales) y las tranquilizantes y monocordes expectativas de los demás hacia su persona. No parece ser el factor ideológico el único que explique el hecho de que uno de los escritores más importantes del post-boom latinoamericano, alguien que había publicado sus primeras obras en las mejores editoriales (sic) del mundo occidental (Seix Barral, Argos Vergara, Montesinos, Harper & Row, Du Seuil), tuviera tantas dificultades para encontrar un editor hispánico de similar envergadura para sus últimas obras, no recibiera en el mundo hispánico la repercusión crítica que se merecía, y muriera, como

³⁹ One need only mention the case of Jorge Luis Borges and of *Ficciones* [1945] in order to grasp this situation in the sense that the immense influence of *Ficciones* did not coincide with commercial success (the second edition, for example, appeared in 1956, 12 years after the 'Sur' edition and, even in 1965, after four reprints, the amount of distributed copies remained very low in comparison for example to the massive sales of some 'modernist' writer like José María Vargas Vila or with the writers of the so-called 'boom').

⁴⁰ As the University Professor Jesús Barquet underlines, Arenas recognised in 1987 that 'su sobrevivencia económica en el exilio se debió grandemente al mundo académico norteamericano, aunque muchas veces encontró dificultades dentro de éste por hallarlo "controlado por la izquierda más extremista".' [Barquet, 1994: 27]. If this certainly saved him from total bankruptcy, it did not remove him from relative poverty - to such a point that the ashes of his remains were conserved, according to R. Valero [1994a] until late 1991 by his friend Lázaro Gómez Carriles in a plastic bag because they still had not found enough money to buy an urn.

efectivamente murió, en una relativa pobreza. [J. Barquet, 1994: 29-30].

Read literally, this statement is useful, but placed within the perspective of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, as set out here, it adds little to something which already appears clearly in *Antes que anochezca*: Arenas attempts, until the last moment, to have a type of 'managerial' control over his work. Why? To claim that his 'character' or his behaviour are valid reasons is to reduce the issue to a problem of biographical legitimacy.⁴¹

Unquestionably, the remaining issue is that, if one accepted J. Barquet's thesis, it would prove difficult to explain why, since the mid-eighties, Arenas has become one of the recurrent *subjects* of theses, papers and university seminars, both in the United States and in Europe. *Effectiveness* in the composition of an *oeuvre* - which assumes in the case of Arenas a paratextual form - does not necessarily coincide with commercial success (although the publishing market may be a relevant element) or with favourable views of Arenas's personality. In this sense the possible friendships or actions of Reinaldo Arenas are of less interest than why the Spanish-speaking university world, both outside and within the United States, began to speak of Reinaldo Arenas.

⁴¹ Because the deceased Emir Rodríguez Monegal had grasped this situation to a certain extent, he is perhaps the only academic critic of whom Arenas has always spoken of with deference, sympathy and recognition [see, for example, 1992: 334].

3. Other Martyrdoms

“...ce qui en son temps était action
devient pour nous simple information.”
[Genette, 1987: 344].

As we read in *Otra vez el mar*, ‘...[su vida] se desarrolla sobre todo en un plano literario...’ [1982b, 246]. Some critics, using this phrase as a starting point, have found in their reading an identification between Arenas and the romanticism of José Martí, that is to say, as seen already, a confirmation of the identification between ‘life and work’. Nothing could be further from the work of Reinaldo Arenas. Sketching out this romantic perspective, J. Barquet says that it ‘apunta certeramente a la incomprendida raíz martiana de su compleja personalidad’ [1994, 30]. And also F. Soto: ‘...Arenas illustrates how fiction, free of propagandistic constraints, can indeed express much more than overt and unmistakable political messages. Unlike recorded documents, fiction has the particular gift of being able to portray life in its full immediacy and brilliance; it is not merely a recording of life, but a vivid form of life itself.’ [F. Soto, 1994a: 7].

The above perspective on Arenas undoubtedly leads to endless generalization, since it presupposes that the voice which speaks in the novels, according to this biographical account, is the person Reinaldo Arenas, which is certainly a confusion. The biographical account we know as Reinaldo Arenas is one thing and the functioning of the plots attributable to him is another. Obviously there exists some relation between these two spaces, not because ‘Arenas indirectly admits this’ [Barquet, 1994: 30], but rather to the extent that what ought to be analysed is how an auto/biographical narrative interacts with a bibliographical account and its plot, starting above all from the figure of the ‘author’. Such terms as ‘personality’ [30], ‘the life of Arenas’ [29], ‘way of living’ [28] and others

only serve to underline this confusion, where every statement appears to be justified by this appeal to Martí-esque romanticism.

Reinaldo Arenas is the name of a historiographic figure whose link with the biological dimension of that Cuban from the province of Oriente called Reinaldo Arenas who died in New York in 1990 lacks relevance. In other words, what matters is whether there exists a manuscript bearing the title *A la sombra del mar*.⁴² If its author then states that 'nunca nadie, para mí, ha estado menos muerto' [J. Abreu, 1994: 15], this is something personal which belongs to the biological dimension and has nothing to do with literature as it is considered here or, in the words of Juan Abreu himself, '...esto nada tiene que ver con su obra.' [1994, 15]. A similar example could be set out with the 'diary' which R. Valero [1994a] claims to have written during the final stages before the death of Arenas.

4. *Critique génétique*, Illusionism and Arenas's Possible Neighbours

The chief obstacle facing the majority of works 'dedicated to Reinaldo Arenas' is, as it happens, to be found contained in that very expression. To investigate, for instance, whether 'el hueco de la casa de la pintora Clara Morera y Teodoro Tapia ocupa gran parte de *El color del verano*' [Valero, 1994a: 45] is to believe, beyond gossip, in a real entity of the world, which literature would come in some way to fictionalize or to represent. For these analysts, including R. Valero, it is relevant to understand and to know, or at least to believe, that in the writings of Arenas *there are people and*

⁴² According to declarations made by Juan Abreu, author of the supposed manuscript, this would contain a whole series of notes, messages and cuttings of Reinaldo Arenas at the time when he was a fugitive and hidden in the 'Parque Lenin' in Havana, and also at the period when he was imprisoned [see O. Ette, 1992 and J. Abreu, 1994].

This witty and at times acute work can be found in Arenas's Collection [Box 27, folder 1] and consists of 49 prefaces where a past of the author Reinaldo Arenas is elaborated not only in relation to his manuscripts but to an idea of a present as well.

*situations with different names or modalities.*⁴³ This defence of euphemism is to be found precisely at opposite ends to the notion of literature here attributed to that biobibliographical account known as the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

When someone says, for example, 'la buhardilla la visité mucho; se encuentra muy bien descrita en su cuento *Termina el desfile*' [Valero, 1994a: 43], he is absolutely convinced not only that everything which occurs can be written but, even more importantly, that an author's auto/biographical story has a cognitive relation within the plot of his books. The naiveté and weakness of argument of this conjectural manner of dealing with an idea of author does not cease to amaze. It is as if in order to interpret and read *The Shadow Line* from different perspectives (using an example to hand) it were relevant to know Joseph Conrad's neighbourhood in Capel House in 1915 and thus discover that in actual fact the man on whom Captain Giles was physically modelled lived in the house - to the left - and that an Australian woman of the neighbourhood, called Sarah Pilgrim (1880-1938) was Conrad's lover until he met Jane Anderson in the summer of 1916. In this sense, my hypothesis would be that if the construction of an auto/biographical story is relevant to the bibliographical narrative of Reinaldo Arenas, as indeed I believe to be the case, this is not because of the supposed references which can be found relating to people or to events, but because of the use and *paratextual* function of the said auto/biographical story within the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

⁴³ As is known, the convenience of one expression rather than another is the mode of functioning of all euphemisms. Is Reinaldo Arenas's literature a euphemism for the island of Cuba which we should only read through the eyes of those who knew him biologically? In the appendices of this study I include my response in the form of a letter to the review *Encuentro de la cultura cubana* edited by Jesús Díaz.

Furthermore, in mentioning R. Valero I have wished to demonstrate the breadth and extent of this attitude, to such a point where even someone in Valero's unequalled position and with his unsurpassed body of information was no stranger to the illusion which sees in certain events in an author's auto/biographical story, the originals which will appear *disguised* in the books ascribed to that auto/biography. It is as if in order to understand and enjoy *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* it were essential to know that 'Delfin Proust' is Delfin Prats Pupo, a contemporary inhabitant of the town of Holguín, in the east of Cuba. Nothing could be more ill-judged or barren.

Finally, this belief found in much of the literary criticism - where, as is clear, no distinction is made between auto/biographical story and bibliographical narrative and no precise explanation given as to the nature of the link that would exist between these two plots - tends to be complemented by some works which claim legitimacy and certainty because of the analysis of the manuscripts attributed to Reinaldo Arenas.⁴⁴ In other words, this deluded search for the biological dimension of the person named Reinaldo Arenas, misunderstood as 'biography', is additionally confused with another misunderstanding which some express under the veiled disguise of *critique génétique*. This is as if to say that the call to obsessive taxonomic labours with the manuscripts of the Reinaldo Arenas's Collection could guarantee the *reality* and veracity of all the commentaries that call themselves biographical, when they actually consist in gossipy attributions to the character created by academic literary critics under the name of Arenas (or *Arenitas*, to continue using the terminology).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ It is fair to point out that, amongst all those literary critics's works consulted, there is one which, though one may not agree with many of its conjectures (based mainly on an analysis of the plots) or with the final thesis, is nevertheless a serious paper, with interesting ideas about *El portero*. I refer to Alina Camacho-Gingerich's work [1994]. The same could be said in general in this sense, of O. Ette's work [1992, above all].

⁴⁵ The vague appeal to a *critique génétique* is another way of hiding/covering up the biographic gossip by some of the university critics of Arenas. For this reason it is not surprising that the university community

To consider the manuscripts attributed to Reinaldo Arenas in relation to the books published under an authorship bearing his name or, more importantly, to consider the specific relation between the manuscripts and the Spanish-speaking market, undoubtedly leads, in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, to serious consequences [see, for example, J. Bellemin-Noel, 1972 and A. Gresillon/M. Werner, 1985]. Nonetheless, to position a *value* that is literary (concerning the author Reinaldo Arenas) and heuristic (concerning the analyses of literary criticism dealing with Reinaldo Arenas) starting from a *formalization* of the manuscripts (also as texts) attributed to Reinaldo Arenas does not appear to be a speculation greatly differing from the type of analysis that confers any validity to paratext in discussions of plot [see, for example, L. Hay, 1979 and R. Debray-Genette, 1988].⁴⁶ Put in different terms: if a notion of manuscript in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* serves to determine the paratextual nature of an idea of literature and a consequent radical form of perceiving 'scriptorial activity', in reaction to the Spanish language market and the academic communities of 'Latin American literary criticism', then an investigation *avant le livre* [J. Bellemin-Noel, 1972] is relevant. But if the pursuit of manuscripts does not produce results in what Gérard Genette has called 'the work's pragmatic dimension' [1982, 10] - or what U.Eco [1979] understands as 'costrutto culturale' - but on the contrary

of 'Latin-American Studies' established in the USA (the [cubanistas] in particular) confuses interpretative legitimacy with biographic gossiping.

On the other hand, despite the opinion of researchers like R. Melançon [1994], the benefit of applying such a method as a *critique génétique* is debatable. I prefer to think of different works of analysis where notions such as those of manuscript, book and market are thoroughly considered and looked at from a perspective which differs from the one given by the classic philologists. Works like the one by Louis Hay point in this direction and are of great interest and utility. However, the fact that these studies share some aspects of the analysis does not authorize the vague and French idea of constituting a method. In other words, there is not such a thing as a *critique génétique* but a number of works -some of them of certain relevance- that deal with problems related to the idea of writing (*escritura*), history of literature, the editorial market and the figure of the author.

⁴⁶ It is from this evaluative consideration - what literary critics occasionally call 'textuality' - that place is given to the *Reinaldo Arenas Museum* in the Firestone Library of Princeton University.

to an increase in purely formalized discussion variants in every 'text' (attributed to Reinaldo Arenas) in particular, then, in my view, such an analysis lacks purpose.

5. 'Arenismo' and its Unreliable Varieties

The relevance of a *paratextualité* in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, is also indicated by the fact that while Arenas was still alive quite a number of academic analysts (not uncoincidentally, for Arenas has few non-academic commentators) dedicated themselves to the bibliographical dimension [see for example L. Hasson, 1992a; E. M. Santí, 1980 and 1984]. This does not appear to have happened with other Spanish language writers taken up by the academic world, or has happened only belatedly. This is, I believe, further evidence of the impossibility of *reading* - apprehending would be the correct term - Arenas's *oeuvre* without a paratextual perspective (and here I am in no way referring to that institutional confusion which makes of Arenas a testimonial writer).

The absorption with bookish detail which has characterised academic criticism since 1990 has been increasing, and there exists a kind of non-declared carnivalesque competition - above all amongst those who work in universities and knew Reinaldo Arenas alive- to contribute bibliographical details (even the slightest) and traits (including gossip) whose importance varies from case to case.⁴⁷ Former university teacher Rosario Rexach says: 'Es siempre una dificultad, al juzgar una obra de ficción, que se conozca al autor. Se tiende, en dichos casos, a proyectar la imagen y la vida de la persona que se conoce en los personajes que pueblan sus ficciones. Y aún se

⁴⁷ Or, in the worst of cases, to make of those 'details' a kind of secret from which would emanate the enunciator's legitimacy.

identifican sus avatares con los que han ocurrido en la vida del autor.' [Rexach, 1994: 139]. This was scarcely worth saying but at least it demonstrates that this situation demands a precision and care not exercised by all literary critics, above all if they 'knew the author personally'.

It is worth noting, as I have said, that although Arenas may not be unique amongst authors in finding himself in this situation, with other authors it is, however, limited to discussing the definition of an auto/biographical story rather than arguing about the bibliographical narration itself, as is the case with Arenas. This is further proof, in my view, of the existence of a paratextual dimension, that is, of the hypothesis that proposes that the originality of the idea of literature posited by Arenas is, as with Borges, that *the books take place* (are read and written) *from the paratext* - a paratext which clearly includes that 'red de manuscritos', as we earlier termed the series of writings carried out by Arenas in the 'Cuban period', as well, undoubtedly, as the writings produced in the United States.⁴⁸

Obviously this situation, this chasing after the legitimacy of the 'I was', 'I saw him', when not of the 'I, who have these unpublished documents' variety, while it may prove informative and useful on the one hand, on the other generates a whole series of contradictions and vested interests which, more than indicating a respect for what we know as Arenas's *oeuvre*, displays the conditions in which the publishing market functions and the conventions of academic dealings.

It has to be said, however, that Arenas himself made frequent contradictory statements regarding the dates and publishing events of the 'Cuban period',

⁴⁸ In other words, to the manuscripts is assigned a scriptorial activity, to the books 'the work's pragmatic dimension' [Genette, 1982: 10]. It is then a case of finding the links between the manuscripts and the conditions of these pragmatic dimensions.

and also used gossip, sarcasm and vendetta, brought into play in *Antes que anochezca*. So these antecedents were sufficient for the already flimsy lines of academic argument of Spanish-speaking literary critics, and of so-called 'Cubanismo' in particular, to be unable to resist this superior force. It should not be forgotten, obviously, that Arenas, in the end, spent at least fifteen years placing the manuscripts which he had created, a degree of care which cannot be attributed to the academic critics of 'Latin American literature' who are attempting, on the contrary, to position his name as a commercial brand.

6. *Il Barone Rampante*

Porque, ¿qué es la libertad sino la posibilidad de jugar, burlándonos hasta de nosotros mismos y a la vez tratando de aprender un poco más de los otros al parodiarlos? (...) Sólo podemos ser auténticos si cambiamos incesantemente.
[R. Arenas, 1989a: 131]

The *paratextualité* within which Arenas's books again and again locate themselves, position themselves and support themselves also carry the unavoidable risk of a 'realist' reading - the euphemism is inevitable - to which many literary critics have accommodated themselves.

Dolores Koch maintains that '...es indiscutible que además de *El mundo alucinante*, su obra de mayor éxito internacional, el legado personal de Reinaldo Arenas fue el desenmascaramiento de la realidad cubana bajo el sistema castrista.' [D. Koch, 1994: 122-3]. This conjecture is a prolongation of the conjuring trick already described. To read (what we call) Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* as a code (*clave*) for an auto/biographical story does not mean to construct a series of supposed 'real references' - as is still said in Havana and which some academic critics hold to without stating it - but to

see, on the contrary, how this auto/biographical story is made into an effective 'principio de realidad'.⁴⁹ In other words, the construction of events as fable (*fabulesca*) matters more than the biographical references which could be used to refer to them, because the auto/biographical story in Arenas does not function as a 'real referent' but as a *principium individuationis*, as an indispensable paratextual support.

On another point, it is my hypothesis that in Arenas's *oeuvre* any notion of country is mediated by an idea of territory which precedes it or, to put it in more precise terms, of the *territorialization* of space [G. Deleuze/F. Guattari, 1991]. I believe Cabrera Infante's mockery [1992] to be pertinent when he says that Cuba is not a nation but a notion. It is also for this reason that all testimonial preoccupation or analysis of the 'reality/fantasy' 'truth/lie' genre is out of place from the very outset: Reinaldo Arenas constructs spaces, makes territories and is not concerned with the 'Cuban reality' which engages the literary critics.

I do not consider the fact that Arenas's biographical account is that of a frenzied 'anti-Castrista', who spent almost the entire decade of the 1980s in the United States, changes this situation much. What we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is neither 'testimonial' (a testimony to what?) nor 'historical', two of the *bêtes noires* of academic critics.⁵⁰ It is not so because Arenas himself, like most of his contemporaries (both those from Havana and those who were not), did not believe in the possibility of communicating a

⁴⁹ In order not to enter into further discussion of 'journalistic' matters, such as this extraordinary idea of 'unmasking', it is enough to quote the case of Cabrera Infante, who, since the beginning of the sixties has spoken of 'dictatorship' to refer to Castro's military dictatorship and attacked its domination of a disappearing world. Perhaps it is true that Arenas was the first to indicate and perceive the ruination of this world, as Delfin Prats [1996] himself suggests.

⁵⁰ In relation to this, Arenas left no scope for doubt: 'F.S. -¿Y las novelas de Miguel Barnet? [...] R.A. - Claro. Ese tipo de cosa también interesa mucho al Estado porque no son en realidad novelas, son testimonios que se llegan a escribir en forma de libro.' [Soto, 1990: 55].

biological dimension of any person, as has already been argued, and in the second place because, as Alina Camacho-Gingerich [1994] has clearly demonstrated, referring not by chance to *El portero*, in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* memory and imagination coincide -just as, I would add, memory and writing also coincide.⁵¹

In other words, any reading of the books attributed to that auto/biographical narrative we call Reinaldo Arenas, taking as its starting point the history of the governments or institutions of the island of Cuba, has no interest because the relevant question lies elsewhere: how Arenas produces events, how he makes of an event a scriptorial occurrence, how he describes an event, how he temporalizes making use of the calendar but removing its value, how he varies the meaning of stories of different sorts (literary or other) and not only of the stories but also of the events and situations they are supposedly convening or evoking. Examples of the latter might include José Martí or Cirilo Villaverde, the notion of frontier, the idea of perception. The question is likewise to be found in how sensibility can be displayed in a world where subjectivization (the portero Juan, in *El portero*, being beyond any doubt a key example) is characterised by a lack of communication between sensibility and thought, in how writing emerges as a limited medium through bodies, through pain, through suffering, in short, *through all that which has no possible writing*.

Consequently, it is absurd for certain literary critics to talk of the 'fictionalization of events' [Koch, 1994] in order to refer to the narratives which make up (what we call) Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. To put it succinctly, Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* constructs facts not simply as fabled

⁵¹ For this reason also the first person plural which carries forward the narration in *El portero* is not, as the literary critics claim, a representation or symbol of the 'Cuban exile' [D. Koch, 1994] but the questioning of an idea of author and of a form of understanding literature [Soto, 1990].

(*fabulada*) events but rather as the occurrence of sensibility and writing. The very idea of a *fact* is a purely literary entity - for 'literary' read *literatura visual*, as Arenas put it [see, for example, O. Ette, 1992].

In Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* there is no fictionalization but rather *fictions* in a Borgesian sense. The space of the book appears as the observatory - hence the applicability of a 'visual literature' - from which known spaces are re-territorialized.⁵² For this reason too, in Arenas as in Borges, a theory of writing is present throughout the *oeuvre* - the fact that this theory had suffered changes through different times and periods, as it is the case in Borges, does not diminish the importance of the fact that it has a place of privilege and dominance in the definition of the very idea of *obra*.

This notion of fiction is Reinaldo Arenas's libertarian root, the explanation of which through a conception of a 'literature of denunciation or witness' is a travesty, because it aims to incorporate those narratives we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* into the chronology of institutions (university, government in exile, Cuban state or what ever) which understand the world and events through years, calendars and true histories. All of this may have interested the biological person called Reinaldo Arenas, although even that is arguable, but it has nothing to do with that historiographical personage that for the sake of convenience we continue to call Reinaldo Arenas.

If there exists, as Italo Calvino said, solitude on paper, undoubtedly this personage will be more alone than ever, defending himself on the one hand from that academic contingency which explains everything hagiographically and, on the other, from official anniversaries which ought somehow to find

⁵² For a more precise perspective on this 'bookish space' one may consult *Le livre à venir* [1959] and *L'écriture du désastre* [1980] of Maurice Blanchot. However, a detailed discussion regarding this 'bookish space', can be founded in D. McKenzie [1986 y 1993].

him a place. If my hypothesis is correct, the personage Reinaldo Arenas sensed this community of interests - whether North American universities or Castro's government matters little - and his creation of a *paratextualité* functions in relation to that. In addition, it remains to be seen what will happen with those narratives we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* when the *files* the Cuban military dictatorship has on Arenas are made public, as also the letters and material yet to be published. Will *Antes que anochezca* continue to be the ordering principle between auto/biographical story and bibliographical narration when all these writings come on the academic or publishing market?

Chapter 3

1. Proofs and evidences of Arenas

I believe that to consider Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* in terms of 'history' (or 'counter-history') [Rozencaig, 1986] or 'testimony' (or 'counter-testimony') [Soto, 1994a] is a failure to understand the writing's radical nature or, better still, the radical nature of the activity of writing exercised by Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* [see, for a more theoretical and extended discussion on this point, Appendix 4 (volume 2)]. There is in this narrative set (the Arenas' *oeuvre*) a notorious *fabrication of proofs* (or evidences) - that these 'proofs' should later be employed as 'historical discourse' or 'history of literature' is of no relevance here. The focus, in other words, should be situated on the nature of the manufacture of the proof and not in its results.

What we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* transports us in fact beyond what the market for books in Spanish currently considers to be 'literature', that is, it directs us to problems, questions and arguments linked to current debates about writing, which have arisen predominantly in Latin America [see for example Mignolo, 1996]. And it is in this respect that the names of Jorge Luis Borges and Reinaldo Arenas are to be found in the same *frame* - a frame I understand, following W. Mignolo [1996], with the notion of *linguaging* [see also Maturana, 1995].

Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is only literature if by such we understand what German nineteenth-century philologists called *literaturgeschichte* - that is to say, to the extent that a group of *voices* (authors, characters) defines an argument (a space) and refers to it making public (bibliography) a series of outlooks and viewpoints (territorialization).

2. 'Cubanismo': An Academic Registered Trade Mark

'Cubanismo' is a journalistic form of understanding literature practised, above all, by staff and teachers at North American universities. Although there is no agreement among them all and they do not form any association, their analytical perspective is equally primitive and rudimentary if one considers the epistemological approach employed by the majority, despite effusive declarations to the contrary through the use of diverse and ephemeral modes: 'documentary novel', 'gender studies', 'literatura comprometida', etc. The first institutional exercise of this group is undoubtedly the appropriation of a series of arguments and authors, equally identified as 'Cubans' and from this starting point an attempt to offer *authorized* explanations and analyses of them. As is obvious, such analysis matters less than the decision (conquest of the market) by which an argument or author can be thought of as the private property of these universities, even when there is amongst them an infinity of disputes and disagreements.⁵⁵ *Reinaldo Arenas: Alucinaciones, fantasía y realidad* represents in fact the movement from which - through the treatment of a series of arguments and of the assignment to these of an 'official' significance and of a bibliography - the author bearing the name of Reinaldo

⁵⁵ An oddity of 420 pages published recently by one Ruth Behar and entitled *Puentes a Cuba* [Michigan University Press, Ann Arbor, 1995] is perhaps the best example of this 'Cubanismo' whose members do not succeed in concealing a dispute for institutional space in terms of publications - such is the situation of the North American academic community dedicated to 'Hispanoamerican studies'.

Arenas would be a privileged part of this privileged throng.⁵⁶ It is the 'cubanismo' dealing with Arenas ('Arenismo') which finds in this book its first and general paradigmatic expression, although without attempting to embrace *every* aspect and character of 'Cubanismo'.

'Cubanismo' is the site of arguments which are commonplace and of legitimacies which are inscriptions and obsequies to North American academic institutions or Spanish language market publishers; it produces few works which avoid that permanent colonization of new ideas and that trivialization of the literary in terms of 'society', 'history' and a whole series of notions that cannot be grasped, a vague idealism which produces an idea of literature that grew up in in the meanders prior to Fidel Castro's dictatorship, that is to say, the Cuban nineteenth century, and still continues to vegetate.

Reinaldo Arenas: alucinaciones, fantasía y realidad marks not only 'Cubanismo's' official debut with regard to an author bearing the name of Arenas but also represents the first book entirely devoted to that totality of narratives known as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. This book also represents, in general terms, the best expression of the romanticism of the literary critics that I have already mentioned and that we will see again in Chapters 4 and 5 [see also, for a short *resumé* and description of this book, Appendix 4].

⁵⁶ As will be seen later, the great majority of biographical and/or chronological sketches, produced for one reason or another by literary critics are faithful not only (as we shall also see) to Arenas's auto/biographical account but also and particularly to a *curriculum vitae* formulated by Arenas which he used in order to offer a summarised image of the auto/biographical story which he wanted heard, especially as regards the definition and selection of events.

3. Arenas and the diasporas in Myrna Solotorevsky's Manual

i

Myrna Solotorevsky's manual bases its entire analysis upon a concept of *mimesis* - the exceedingly thorny nature of which has already been indicated by P. Ricoeur [1983-5] - which allows us, in the first place, to talk of different theories about 'the world' and, secondly, to identify a notion of writing. The circularity of this proposal is evident: world and writing ('world-writing') are mutually defined in theory and as a point of reference also constituting the aim of the analysis. 'Como he señalado anteriormente, me importa relacionar cada uno de los conceptos de mundo antes especificados con la noción de escritura.' [Solotorevsky, 1993: 32].

As indicated earlier in regards to the literary critics engaged with Arenas, what does not cease to surprise is the disjunction between a severe complexity of theories and generic classifications based on an epistemological proposal as naive as it is obtuse. This is not only because the *legitimacy* of what has been set out dwells in the *academic brand names* displayed ('Barthes', 'Derrida', 'Genette', etc.) - and not, as would be expected, in the line of argument of one of the author's own ideas about, for example, Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* - but also because behind all this academic jargon ('intertextuality', 'ontological zone', 'intertext', etc.) there exists a *petitio principii* which removes all interest regarding a possible analysis of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. Myrna Solotorevsky states on page 16 of her manual, 'Prescindiendo desde ahora de mundo entendido como extratexto...' I'm not sure if I understand correctly the meaning of 'extratext' but I suppose that it signifies on the one hand 'todo lo que no es libro' and on the other all that which has not been identified as 'perteneciente al lenguaje

universitario de crítica literaria'. To then speak of 'el mundo como heterocosmos' [p. 16], having started from the already-mentioned basis, seems to me not so much a limitation as an institutionally boring exercise.

ii

'Postulo,' declares Myrna Solotorevsky,

que el mundo concebido como heterocosmos es inherente a todo texto literario. El grado en que se da la enajenación del lenguaje mimético variará en los diferentes textos y, como tendencia, corresponderá a un rasgo epocal; piénsese, por ejemplo, en la tendencia antimimética vigente en la actualidad. Por extremada que sea esa tendencia en un texto determinado, aunque un predominio de frases no se enajenen en mundo, puedo preguntarme por la índole del heterocosmos inherente al texto. Concibo la capacidad que una obra tiene de revelar mundo, en proporción directa a su logro estético. [1993, 16].

Verbiage of this kind in earlier academic works dealing with Arenas has already been mentioned. However, what distinguishes this latest example is its self-evidence: that a fiction is a world and that every world has its particular characteristics is a recurrent vision of the literary, which requires no more than a dozen or so words. In the final analysis, Myrna Solotorevsky's proposal ends up in the same *cul-de-sac*, all academic literary analysis directed at Arenas tends to, that is to say, placing every perspective in relation to 'its aesthetic achievement', a subject about which there are as many theories as there are possibilities. In other words, the sterile density of Myrna Solotorevsky's essay is summarised in (is based on, is supported by) some generalizations which, every so often, here and there, make their appearance, displaying that grotesque disproportion between the complex apparatus of literary criticism and simplistic epistemological attitude. 'Figurative language' [57], 'fictitious references' [57], 'real author'

[57] and 'ideology' are amongst the paradoxical expressions in which nineteenth century primitivism makes its appearance.

iii

Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is characterised precisely by what Myrna Solotorevsky ignores, that is, the 'world understood as extratextual': the idea of text found in Spanish language academic literary criticism and a notion of 'aesthetic achievement' do not constitute useful tools for the consideration of the radical situation of that set of narratives we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. Because this *oeuvre* works precisely by making problematic what Solotorevsky naïvely calls 'world external to the *oeuvre*' [1993, 9]: there is no world external to the *oeuvre*. What there is, is writing and the market. This is, amongst other things, what one grasps when reading Reinaldo Arenas or, more accurately, when confronting the *contemporaneity* at the core of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

iv

In Myrna Solotorevsky's work, what takes away interest from the idea of world is its epistemological poverty. All the notions of the world considered are summarised in the same way: a world where the distinction between the system of the real and artistic object is never discussed. The mention of Ricoeur - who undoubtedly analyses the idea of *Welt* more profoundly than a mere academic exercise would entail - is insufficient since this is taken *à la page*. A consideration of the *Welt* commented on by Ricoeur in relation to all literary work would mean, taking into account the *coupure épistémologique* between 'temps du monde et temps du récit' [see P. Ricoeur, 1983-5 and 1986], something never considered by Myrna Solotorevsky.

v

Myrna Solotorevsky carries out her work 'prescindiendo desde ahora de mundo entendido como extratexto...' [1993, 16]. This constitutes, as I have said, precisely the opposite to what I view as relevant in Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre*: the world in Arenas is always a *possible world* not only in literary terms but also, and especially, in cognitive terms. In other words, the very notion of a world emerges from writing and, in this sense, a notion of 'text' is of little use. This is because it is not a matter of analysing in a literary manner one or many publications attributed to an author, but of considering the relationship between the market, literary work and a concept of an author or, put more accurately, Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is distinguished precisely by its *aliterary* formulation - at least by Solotorevsky's criteria - in that the plot of a novel, for example, is not the result of its own contents but of the paratextual construction which fosters and generates it, whether this be with regard to the auto/biographical account, the bibliographical narration or the 'world' it elaborates as *horizon d'attente*.

vi

Myrna Solotorevsky declares that, '...entiendo "mundo" en el segundo sentido antes señalado, el correspondiente a Martínez Bonati.' [1993, 23]. And '...para quien mundo es el estrato resultante de la enajenación del lenguaje mimético' [1993, 12]. Accepting this hypothesis and taking as given the classification of an idea of mimesis as 'creative imitation' [1993, 17], this leaves aside, however, the issue that all reasoning turns on the distinction between the world of the work/world alien to the work which, from an epistemological perspective (I have in mind both Michel de Certeau's [1980] problematising of representation and Hayden White's

[1978 and 1987] notion of the *tropos* which mediates any narrative that purports to refer to reality), turns out to be at the very least ,simplistic.

Two brief initial references ['van Alphen 1989' and 'McHale 1987'] serve as a pretext for Myrna Solotorevsky to talk of something called 'postmodernist literature'. In this sense *La relacion mundo-escritura* is inscribed within the misty and fleeting frame set up by Eduardo Béjar [1987] with whom she shows her affinity.

vii

As already seen in the case of *The Pentagonía*, one cannot simplify the linking-up of the writings attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, given their particular condition with regard to the relationship between manuscript and book. In this sense, Solotorevsky's study appears to have been written without problematizing the 'world' it assumes in a vacuum, at least in what relates to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

Myrna Solotorevsky maintains that 'Debido a la reiteración muy evidente en el intertexto de Arenas, de determinados motivos que tienen fuerza obsesiva, debido también a la penetración de un texto en otro, mediante instancias diegéticas...' [1993, 33]. Nevertheless, at no point is this statement justified, neither is it indicated where and when it can be validated. It is another *petitio principii* of the critical corpus on Arenas.

viii

This paradoxical discrepancy between a complexity of argument and an epistemic principle which arises in what is commonly termed the literary criticism of Latin American literature can be clearly observed in the final part of Solotorevsky's analysis.

After about 200 pages, Solotorevsky ends, as is her norm throughout the entire analysis, by conveying her opinion indirectly through the work of others. And in this sense she completes her analysis of Arenas with a not wholly unexpected banal association of the ever-vague journalistic concepts of 'ideology' and 'postmodernism':

1. 'Como ha señalado Suleiman (1983), cabe hacer un uso amplio del término "ideología", según el cual, cualquier representación de la realidad humana sería ideología, en cuanto depende de y expresa de alguna manera, una ideología más o menos conscientemente definida.' [1993, 253].

2. 'En esta misma línea de pensamiento, Hutcheon ha afirmado: "all social practice (including art) exists by and in ideology and, as such, ideology comes to mean <the ways in which that we say and believe connects with the power-structure and power-relations of the society we live in> (Eagleton 1983, 14)" (1988, p. 178). Según Hutcheon el Postmodernismo enseña que toda práctica cultural tiene un subtexto ideológico que determina las condiciones de su posibilidad de producir significados.' [1993, 253].

3. 'La amplitud de esta perspectiva, uniformaría obviamente a los tres intertextos que he analizado; pero lo que, a mi juicio, resulta relevante es captar el factor diferenciador entre ellos, y como tal propongo al *grado de manifestación* de la ideología.' [1993, 253].

4. 'Dicho grado es máximo en el *corpus* de Arenas, en el cual la ideología es explícita, llegando incluso a ser proclamada. Cabe enunciar esta ideología, según Rozencvaig, como "la constante búsqueda de un espacio liberador, sede de incesantes transgresiones" (1986, p. 7). Como se ha advertido, la exaltación de la libertad adquiere especial vigor en aquellos momentos del intertexto areniano en los que se condena la opresión instaurada

por el régimen de Castro, los que ciertamente logran, como ha señalado Ette (1992), una proyección universal.' [1993, 253].

The length of the quotation is an attempt to show up the inappropriateness of devoting more than 100 pages to an author (or at least to Arenas) to then conclude with these statements which anyone can read in those magazines of 'cultural diffusion' which have dealt for years with the academic and publishing business known as 'Latin America'. In this sense, Myrna Solotorevsky's text book is no different in any respect from Francisco Soto's academic exercise [1994a], although it has to be said that the character of Arenas (what I call *Arenitas*) to be found in *La relación mundo-escritura* is certainly not as easy to locate.

ix

The compendium of quotations constituting the introduction to Solotorevsky's book ('Theoretical considerations', p. 11) is not enough to give a clear idea of 'writing' and 'world' since, beyond the multiple references to European lecturers and academics of renown in the market, each notion rests upon another and is, at the very least, of dubious intelligibility. 'A partir del planteamiento hasta ahora delineado, puede entenderse "escritura", en oposición a "mundo", como el lenguaje no supeditado a una función mimética, que permanece, persiste como tal sin enajenarse.' [1993, 22].

From this mirror game, from this compendium of theories, we are left perhaps with a summary of some of the most commercialised names in the academic literary market of the last fifteen or twenty years. If it is a matter of *classifying* Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* according to certain taxonomies of literary and academic criticism, then undoubtedly the work of Solotorevsky

fulfils the assignment which Francisco Soto [1994a] had earlier undertaken, but scarcely fulfilled.

4. Linguaging Arenas

Commenting on Teun van Dijk, Umberto Eco declares that, 'I *frames* sono elementi di 'conoscenza cognitiva... rappresentazioni circa il <mondo> che ci permettono di attuare atti cognitivi basilari come percezioni, comprensione linguistica e azioni'.' [Eco, 1979: 80]. For U. Eco the frames are *sceneggiature*, <mises en scène>: 'In tal senso *una sceneggiatura è sempre un testo virtuale o una storia condensata*.' [Eco, 1979: 80]. That narrative ensemble we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* has as one of its features, as both corpus and unity, precisely that of inscribing itself within a specific *frame* (one or several). In this sense, 'sceneggiature' could be equated with the notion of *agencement* of which G. Deleuze and F. Guattari speak in order to refer to a speculative system. Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, in order to function as such, is constantly fabricating *frames* upon which to move.⁵⁷ Let us then look at a possible <mise en scene> for what we call Arenas's *oeuvre*.

The North American scholar of Argentinian origin, Walter Mignolo, exploring the current situation of the languages in the market and their relationship to an idea of culture, speaks of *transculturation*: 'Transculturation subsumes the emphasis placed on borders, migrations, plurilinguaging, and multiculturing and the increasing need to conceptualize transnational and transimperial languages, literacies, and literatures.' [1996,

⁵⁷ Hence also the relevance, as already indicated, of the perspective of a *horizon d'attente*, the notion of a <horizon of expectation>.

182].⁵⁸ And he adds, trying to characterize this change (<these phenomena>):

Such challenges alter the commonly held belief that linguistic and literary studies deal only with texts and literary authors, with canon formation and transformation, and with aesthetic judgements and textual interpretations. Transnational languaging processes demand a theory and philosophy of human symbolic production predicated on languaging and transnational and transimperial categories, on a new philology, and on a pluritopic hermeneutics that will replace and displace "the" classical tradition in which philology and hermeneutics were housed in the modern period. [1996: 183].

If we were to conjecture a space for that set we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, this would undoubtedly be *sustained* upon an idea of contemporaneity in conditions similar to these, so that such notions as 'lengua', in terms of the history of literature primarily, would yield to other forms and denominations:

It is languaging, rather than language, that Arguedas (the reference is to José María Arguedas's introduction to *Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman*) and Cliff (the reference is to Michelle Cliff's book *The Land of Look Behind*) allow us to emphazise, moving away from the idea that language is a fact (e.g., a system of syntactic, semantic, and phonetic rules) toward the idea that speaking and writing are moves that orient and manipulate social domains of interaction. (...) It is the concept of literature that, like the concept of languages, should be displaced from the idea of collecting facts (e.g., literary works;

⁵⁸ For another approach to the use of the term 'transculturización' see for example Ortiz, 1940 y Rama, 1982. Ortiz and Rama are the 'precursores' of the use of the concept of 'transculturización' to explain the cultural situation in South America.

masterpieces) to the idea of languaging as cultural practice.
[1996, 188-189].⁵⁹

Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* (indeed we might say any notion of *oeuvre*, but that problem does not concern us here) is unquestionably a set of narrations whose unity is maintained by possible routes and itineraries based on a possible concept of *languaging*. Here we are not as interested in the possible linguistic precision of this term (as suggested by W. Mignolo) as in the panorama, the possible scenario it offers:

The scenario sketched above is embedded in a larger picture where colonial legacies and current globalizing processes meet (...) The increasing process of economic and technological global integration and some of its consequences (massive migrations) are forcing us to rethink the relationships between (national) languages and territories. The rearticulation of nations, as a result of the global flow of economic integration, is forming a world of connected languaging and shifting identities. As people become polyglots, their sense of history, nationality, and race becomes as entangled as their languaging. Border zones, diaspora, and postcolonial relations are daily phenomena of contemporary life. [1996, 191].

Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* can be *read* (understood) more fruitfully, I believe, in relation to an idea of contemporaneity than linked to an already evaporated concept of 'nation'. More than 'Cubanismo' we have in Reinaldo Arenas an attitude of *territorialization* or, to put it better, a formulation of identity based on a mobile cartography; there is no longer nationality in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* but 'languaging activity' [1996, 193]. Put in its historiographical context: 'The current process of globalization is not a new

⁵⁹ The books commented on are: 1) Jose María Arguedas: *Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman/A Nuestro Padre Creador Tupac Amaru*, Salqantay, Lima, 1962; 2) Michelle Cliff: *The Land of Look Behind: Prose and Poetry*, Firebrand, Ithaca (NY), 1985.

phenomenon, although the way in which it is taking place is without precedent. On a large scale, globalization at the end of the twentieth century (mainly occurring through transnational corporations, the media, and technology) is the most recent configuration of a process that can be traced back to the 1500s, with the beginning of transatlantic exploration and the consolidation of Western hegemony.' [1996, 192]. And, what is more, Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* exercises, within this contemporaneity, specificities and distinctions of the Spanish language taken to America, of which undoubtedly Jorge Luis Borges was, with *El idioma de los argentinos* [1928], the first practitioner (hence also the adjective Borgesian to denote Reinaldo Arenas' name at times): 'the same *languages* allow quite different languaging priorities, feelings, and knowledge.' [1996, 194].

5. Arenas's Territory or Sands of the Parque Lenin

Any idea of *vécu* in relation to an auto/biographical story is only a *game* of verisimilitude and representation which is at the very basis of the construction of all subjectivity, or the <I>, if preferred. When Philippe Lejeune [1980] analyses the collection <Vécu> created by the French editor Robert Laffont at the end of the sixties, he is in fact proposing an issue which oversteps the terrain of a 'biographical genre' and is to be found within the contemporary philosophical and rhetorical discussion (in the Barthesian sense) proposed clearly by P. Ricoeur, that is, the relationship between perception and knowledge in terms of temporalization (by means of a theory of space, it should be added) - 'temps vécu' and 'temps du monde', to put it into the terms of P. Ricoeur himself [1983-5, III: 231]. From this perspective Philippe Lejeune's descriptions are useful but they differ from the epistemological *approach* with which we have been considering Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*: the present, what is and happens, has no possible

writing, it belongs to a *biological dimension*, as has been suggested. P. Ricoeur, who speculates on the possible knowledge of the present in terms of temporal formulation (temporalization) speaks of a 'faille entre le temps vécu et le temps du monde' [1983-5, III: 231 and ff] - that which, in a spatial perspective (optical) we call rupture and discontinuity between perception and knowledge.

In this sense, anything *vécu* in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is a scriptorial activity, is writing: the only past (a single notion with multiple narratives) of the author Reinaldo Arenas is that 'represented' in *Antes que anochezca*. Hence the relevance of this book which also functions as *horizon d'attente*: *Antes que anochezca* is not only a conception about the past and memory in relation to a biographical construction, but also constitutes a conjecture in which an agreement is looked for between that perceptive 'becoming' that has no name or writing and that historiographical density (*narrative identity*) which in functional and circumstantial terms we call <I>.

Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, in particular *Antes que anochezca*, exposes the problem of the need for (and at the same time of the impossibility of) an agreement between the becoming (*devenir*) that has no possible writing and the quality or entity which scriptorial activity shows with this *vécu*. In other words, *Antes que anochezca* is to be located in a moving space where happening and what has happened debate the definition of *day*, in that debate the problem being not only what can be written (*Antes que anochezca* as autonomous and independent book) but also what is - and is not- writing (*Antes que anochezca* as literary auto/biography and also in relation to the bibliography of or about Reinaldo Arenas). *Antes que anochezca* turns out to be interesting not because of the gossip and real names used but because for the speculative exercise in which scriptorial activity reflects incessantly

upon the conditions and possibilities of the writable, of what can or cannot be written, which we call the limits of writing.

6. The Translations of Reinaldo Arenas

Translation is not a metaphor of the original; however, the German word designating translation, *übersetzen*, signifies metaphor. *Übersetzen* is the exact translation of the Greek *metaphorein*, to transport, *übersetzen*, to put through something or over something. *Übersetzen*, I would say, translates metaphor - which, declares Benjamin, is not the same thing at all. [Paul de Man, 1986: 130].

There are then two types of translation of the narrative set known as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. On the one hand there is the translation of manuscripts or books attributed to the author, into languages other than Cuban and, on the other hand, the translations executed by literary critics in their analysis of the books or manuscripts attributed to Reinaldo Arenas. With respect to the first, I shall only deal circumstantially; it is from the second, that I have developed the theory of the existence of a character produced by all critics in their handling of the bibliographical narration attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, and of Arenas's auto/biographical story. The consequence of these translations is, as has already been said, the existence of different *Arenitas*.

Calvino maintained in 1984 that

...l'essere tradotti non vuole ancora dire essere letti veramente. È una specie di routine, anche all'estero un romanzo tradotto viene pubblicato in poche migliaia di copie, escono recensioni garbate sui giornali, il volume resta un paio di settimane in

libreria, poi sparisce, ricompare a metà prezzo nei Remainder's, poi va al macero. La gloria internazionale nella maggior parte dei casi vuol dire questo... [Calvino, 1994: 236-7].

This description undoubtedly constitutes a full definition of the second form of translation to which I am chiefly referring: The 'international glory' of which Calvino speaks could be applied to the fate of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* in North American 'Hispanic Studies' circles but, more interestingly still, this conception of Calvino's is a useful tool for considering the consequences that these *translations* have had - or are having - in what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. 'Il fatto de <esistere>,' as Calvino terms the bibliographical dimension, is what has concerned me in relation to the *translators* of the bibliographical narrations attributed to Reinaldo Arenas: what is the significance of the name Reinaldo Arenas in academic communities of Hispanic or Latin American studies? How do the books and writings attributed to the author Reinaldo Arenas function in relation to the auto/biographical story of the same name? What is the extent of its relation to the earlier questions, the 'professional presuppositions' of this majority of North American academic critics?

Undoubtedly, the consideration of these *translations* (in Mignolo and Calvino sense) signifies the understanding of an 'oeuvre' as a set of narrations whose unity is to be built or is built upon a multiplicity of factors which must be considered simultaneously. It is what I have referred to as 'contemporaneity' and it is the *foreignness* which almost all the books published by and attributed to Reinaldo Arenas display. Calvino continues,

Certo l'immagine dello scrittore cambia perché in Italia uno è visto per tutto l'insieme delle sue attività, nel contesto d'una cultura fatta di tante cose, di tanti punti di riferimento, mentre all'estero sono solo i libri tradotti che arrivano come dei

meteoriti, attraverso i quali critici e pubblico devono farsi un'idea del pianeta da cui si sono stacati. [Calvino, 1994: 236].

As already described, this 'contesto d'una cultura fatta de tante cose' never took place in relation to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, which perhaps helps one to grasp more clearly the importance held by the idea of *translation* in understanding what Calvino brilliantly equates with a planetary dimension, something that undoubtedly occurs with all bibliographical narration. In Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* there is only *estero* and it is from here that Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* should be approached, or such is my hypothesis.

7. The Four Reinaldos

No soy una persona, sino dos y tres a la vez. Para ti sigo siendo Gabriel, para aquellos que leen lo que escribo y que casi nunca puedo publicar soy Reinaldo, para el resto de mis amigos con los cuales de vez en cuando me escapo para ser yo totalmente, soy la Tétrica Mofeta. *El color del verano* [Arenas, 1991a: 101].

Finally, the ground covered by this thesis leads us to the need to distinguish between different senses of the name Reinaldo Arenas. The constant references to 'Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*' should then, on this basis, be considered from to different perspectives:

1. The first Reinaldo is the one who defines and tells the auto/biographical story. His name will be ***Reinaldo Arenas*** and he literally is a character in an auto/biographical story.

2. The second Reinaldo is the character to whom is attributed the authorship of a bibliographical narration or, if you prefer, the authorship of a series of

books and manuscripts: he is not only the figure of an author but also of the bibliographies attributed and dedicated to him. His name will be **Reinaldo Arenas** - alias Arenas.

3. The third Reinaldo is a character who emerges in every literary critic's commentaries. This Reinaldo is as numerous as are the literary analyses devoted to Arenas but it could nonetheless be said that he is one and the same: sometimes dealt with by using biographical resources and other times novelistic sources, his attributes and possibilities function and move in relation to the other Reinaldos. His name, as already proposed, will be **Arenitas**.

4. The fourth Reinaldo is the name of a person, the person of a Cuban exile, who was born in 1943 and died in New York in December 1990. This is the name which indicates a biological dimension with no possible writing: 'Inventos. Inventos... Pero la vida no puede tolerarse cuando sólo la habitan cosas figuradas, irreales. La vida necesita de la aventura, de lo diverso. El intercambiado choque de los cuerpos, el correr por sitios verdaderos.' [Arenas, 1980a: 88-89]. This Reinaldo's name will be **REINALDO ARENAS**.⁶⁰

These are the four different names whose identities have appeared throughout this thesis and which it is necessary to distinguish in order for any analysis to make serious progress. In other words, what we call

⁶⁰ How this *indifference* toward the effectively biological aspect of the person named Reinaldo Arenas (REINALDO ARENAS) functions with regard to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is revealed in this interesting passage: <“For quite a while, since long before his exile (the first of his deaths), Reinaldo was no longer a being of flesh and bone but an entity of fiction, one more among the great dramatic personas of our literature. He did not oblige his characters to become persons, rather he carried out the sole legitimate act: to turn his own person into a character.” [Estévez, 1995: 309]. It proves to be interesting because although he concurs in the most common confusion between REINALDO ARENAS, the author bearing the name of Arenas and the auto/biographical account, nonetheless, the author points to a possibility which is one of the outstanding features of Arenas's *oeuvre*: the organising nature of the auto/biographical account over the other elements of Arenas's *oeuvre*.

Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is precisely a particular relationship of agreements and irregularities produced between some of these names. Of course, when I say 'names', I am in fact attempting to consider the diverse *narrative identities*, the conditions of their appearance and the presuppositions with from they work. From the relationships between these four characters - from the use of these four characters - another two Reinaldos can be suggested - not meaning that these basic relationships cease to exist. Here is a diagram to assist in explaining this:

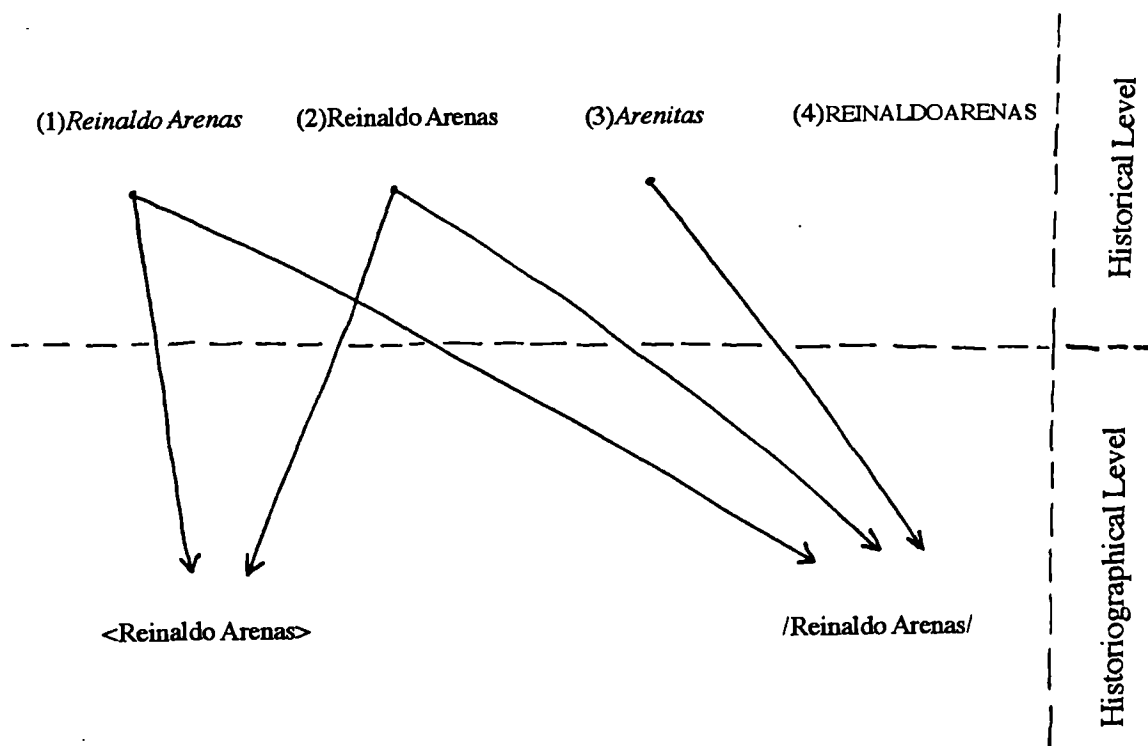


FIGURE 1
The Four Reinaldos.

If we consider *Reinaldo Arenas* and Reinaldo Arenas together the result will be literally what we call 'Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*', from this point on to be

known by the name of <Reinaldo Arenas>. If, in addition to the two earlier Reinaldos, we also take the Reinaldo of the literary critics, that is, *Arenitas*, the result will be what I have been terming biobibliographical narration or account and which from now on I shall refer to by the name of /Reinaldo Arenas/.

Undoubtedly the four Reinaldos represent elementary readings, basic perspectives, whilst the combination or agreement between them is a *result*, a historiographical approach. Thus we could speak of a first or 'historical' level, with its fabrication of events and manuscripts, and of a second, 'historiographical' level, where an *ordering* of events and manuscripts is effected. The events would be, in many cases, *biographical facts* and the manuscripts in some cases 'books by Reinaldo Arenas' in the Spanish language literary market. The movement between these two levels is neither fixed nor unidirectional but is constant in that, while one level may result from the other, both *coexist* and influence each other mutually.

8. Practice and use

It is worth considering, finally, the fact that as a result of this persistent use of paratextual elements (*paratextualité*) made by Reinaldo Arenas, the contradictions and confusions regarding dates, writings and publications are often well-known. As O. Ette claims in this respect, 'Las incongruencias cronológicas resultan de una comparación entre las indicaciones autobiográficas, las entrevistas y las fechas publicadas al final de los textos.' [1992, 112]. I believe that if these inconsistencies exist, it is precisely because Reinaldo Arenas ('number two') was trying to manipulate the *paratextualité* of his writings and works.

In other words, the fact that the paratextualization carried out by Reinaldo Arenas was effective in the long run has not only failed to prevent, over the ten years he was engaged in it, the emergence of inconsistencies but, more importantly still, it has not prevented a whole series of contradictions and misunderstandings regarding the dates and circumstances of some manuscripts and publications (sometimes promoted by the author himself) from circulating.⁶¹ I believe that Reinaldo Arenas has profited from - has produced *his own version* of - some of these confusions and misunderstandings.

⁶¹ It is in this sense that the figure of R. Valero has also functioned as a catalyst or, if preferred, as composer of a series of paratextual elements mentioned in *Antes que anochezca* without being located specifically. For example, in *Antes que anochezca*, Arenas refers to most of his books and places them in relation to the manuscripts of their origin, with regard to particular conditions and so on. However there is no vision there of all the publications or principal works together; the bibliographic principle is defined but not its components, a task which, as far as I could find out, R. Valero began in the mid-eighties.

Chapter 4

1. Arenas's territory

The idea some critics have of attributing a kind of supposed social message to a literary work is undoubtedly a variant of the romanticism which I have been criticising. According to Perla Rozencvaig,

no es la crítica al modo de ser del norteamericano lo que me parece motivó a Arenas a escribir la novela. Una lectura capaz de transgredir la fachada de los discursos de los personajes revela un propósito mucho más importante: el de analizar como (sic) las estructuras socioeconómicas de este país al igual que los patrones culturales imperantes en él han afectado a la comunidad cubana, la cual desde el principio queda doblemente involucrada en la historia ya que tanto el narrador como el ente narrado son productos de esa misma comunidad. [Rozencvaig, 1994: 165].

To speak of 'motivations' with regard to an author immediately strikes me as suspicious - not, alas, suspicion as method, which would have been preferable. Additionally to attribute to him sociopolitical propositions is in the case of Arenas inappropriate.⁶²

O sea -said Arenas in December 1987-, no importa si en Cuba se produce cinco mil quintales de papas, o si es bueno que unos

⁶² Rather as if the possible readers of Julio Cortázar should know what 'anti-Peronism' means in order to read *Casa tomada*.

niños se hayan alfabetizado. La misión de la literatura no es esa. No importa que en Cuba se haya publicado a Sartre o a Solzenitzin, eso incluso es grave que se ponga como mérito. La literatura es un misterio que no puede participar de estas mezquindades políticas de ocasión. Eso no es lo que importa. Lo que importa es que la literatura exige un ejercicio de inspiración. Es algo misterioso que no puede ser catalogado como útil o inútil, la literatura escapa a esas maquinarias políticas. Cuando esas maquinarias políticas la utilizan -y eso es lo que hace todo sistema totalitario, utilizar la literatura- ya eso es muy grave; la literatura deja de ser literatura para convertirse en propaganda. La grandeza de Borges está en que Borges tenía una fe en la creación en sí misma que iba más allá de las circunstancias en que vivía. Una fe que es imprescindible para el escritor, porque detrás de esa fe o esa inocencia está el verdadero creador desnudo con sus palabras y con el mundo a quien él va a trasladar al papel. Esa fe en la creación es lo único que nos hace existir como escritores. Los demás son productores de libros para hacer dinero o ganar un cargo dentro del régimen. El caso de Borges es solamente comparable, dentro de esa ingenuidad creadora o de esa fe en la palabra, con Lezama Lima. En Borges cada poema es una pieza maestra escrita no para quedar bien con Pinochet o Fidel Castro, sino para quedar bien con la literatura. Igual un Lezama Lima, que vivía para el verbo. Pero ese encanto, ese hechizo por la palabra y por la literatura en sí misma muchas veces se va perdiendo. En la mayoría de los escasos congresos a los que yo voy lo que interesa es que usted hable contra de Fidel Castro o a favor. [Soto, 1990: 59].

In other words, the novelesque spaces are not directly those that are biographical. What is more, it is in this *interplay* between biographical story (Cuba) and bibliographical narration (community) - which appears in *El portero* - that is to be found the reterritorialization which I believe Arenas to have constructed from the starting-point of a theory of writing and which, obviously, presupposes an idea of language - not of the tongue - as *art du moteur*. Neither the notion of society nor that of political systems - in the

terms in which these are used by sociology - has meaning or place in the writings of Reinaldo Arenas. All notion of society has disappeared, every idea of government evaporated - above all in *El portero*. In Arenas we do not find society or politics, but rather territories - which can sometimes be seen as collectivities (ethnic, homosexual, of animal nature, etc.) - which are not countries and situations but rather climates and atmospheres, environments.

Cuba or New York are abstractions which possibly have a place in Arenas's auto/biographical story but which, as named in the writings, belong to a space which Arenas governed ruthlessly: that of how to gain power over places whose territory (in terms of significance, in terms of semantic and physical ambience) is never accepted but rather converted, distorted, changed.

If we put into perspective that approximation to Arenas's works by a certain kind of literary criticism, that is, if we take into consideration the 'context of reception' - or, more precisely, what Eliseo Verón [1987] calls *reconocimiento* - of *El portero* in the United States as a depiction of the situation of the Cuban community there,⁶³ then perhaps some logic can be found in the absurd assumption that Reinaldo Arenas, author of *El portero*, and the biographical figure could be one and the same thing, to the extent to which they make it possible to refer to such vague entelechies as 'Cuba', 'cultural standards', 'socioeconomic structures' and other such journalistic diversions. In other words, the story of the Cuban in exile becomes a single interpretative key which erases differences between text and paratext.

⁶³ That is, the Spanish-speaking university world, *parametrización* of success through the so-called 'social sciences', prop of the legitimacy of the institutional academic interpretation, etc.

The production of a literature, in other words an idea of literature and a bibliographical narration, *starting from paratextual elements*, is the hypothesis which leads us towards an idea of spatial composition. Reinaldo Arenas does not create territories: rather he uses, realizes and modifies them. This can be called *reterritorialization* to the extent to which Deleuze and Guattari maintain that all artistic experience (as is also the case with all philosophical experience) tends to elaborate concepts and design a plan [1991, 38]. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that 'Penser se fait plutôt dans le rapport du territoire et de la terre.' [1991, 82]. It is in this *rapport* that I believe Reinaldo Arenas's notion of 'visual literature' to be located, *in a movement which goes from the terrain* (from a certain physicality) *to the territory* (to a certain manner and form of defining space and its contents). It could therefore be said that what defines that which we know as the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas is a *plan de composition* [Deleuze/Guattari, 1991: 65] executed, I believe, through what F. Nietzsche termed *l'art de la méfiance* [in this context see the 'Posthumous Writings' of 1884-85]. This is a radical *constructivism* [Deleuze/Guattari, 1991: 8] which attempts '[une] lutte avec le chaos, mais pour le rendre sensible...' [1991, 192].

It is from this perspective that the following passage from the academic critic Perla Rosencvaig can be taken, not as a *reading* of Arenas regarding a Caribbean republic called Cuba but as the search for the establishment of another territory, a movement of reterritorialization. 'Su exilio,' declares the academic critic 'trasciende el destierro. Aunque para un gran número de exiliados cubanos, Cuba guarda la semilla de su felicidad, Juan busca un destierro de todo destierro, el salir de un cuerpo arraigado a la tierra y a la vida material. Como explica el oso '¿qué sentido tiene la libertad cuando se vive dentro de un cuerpo?' (129). Pero, ¿es posible vivir de otra manera?' [1994, 167]. Thus although, contrary to the interpretation of P. Rosencvaig

and of other critics, *El portero* contains anniversaries ('...uno de los significados más importantes de la novela: el de recordarle a esa comunidad...' [Rozencvaig, 1994: 167]), there is notion but no nation.

Beyond any doubt, all interpretation is the exercise of a *reconocimiento* [E. Verón, 1987]. In this sense one cannot reproach academic literary critics dealing with Reinaldo Arenas for something which could also be applied critically to a great variety of rhetorical disciplines. What I am trying to show here (and I will be returning to it in Chapter 6) is that the viewpoint of much academic criticism regarding what we refer to as the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas can be located in a space *prior* to the context of the latter's *production*. The affirmation that the 'historical' reading or that of 'political condemnation' are in reality the only two fundamental interpretative arguments - which, behind a paraphernalia of supposed theories and of other arguments (humour, sarcasm, satire, etc.) are never considered seriously - recurs more than once. This *backward leap* which with their readings, literary critics unquestionably propose for the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas represents what could be termed the academic world's temporalization (periodilization) of the Spanish-speaking publishing market.

In other words, it is my conjecture that the narratives of academic literary criticism are grouped around the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas - in some way in an attempt to situate the paratext itself - without supplying any literary space other than that already defined by Arenas himself (auto/biographical story and bibliographical narration). And it must be as a result of this that they turn to already established frames of reference and commercial ordering, be this the exercise of confusion between author and bibliographical narration, be it the idea that a writing explains itself through the contents of the means of communication (the history of Cuban

governments, the history of Cuban institutions, etc.) which existed at the moment at which that writing was being produced.⁶⁴ Paradoxically, taking this road, a journalist of the Castro regime such as Roberto Fernández Retamar and a great many of the academic critics concur (although they might not believe this) in the idea that the notion of literary analysis is based almost exclusively on the establishment of a link between a group of books in the Spanish-speaking publishing market and a series of events defined and diffused by the media and the official documents of various governmental institutions (including certain universities). Consequently many people believed that the refusal to allow any book of Arenas's in Cuba was a way of *writing the history of Cuban literature* without the 'criminal común' Reinaldo Arenas. In the same way, although for opposite interests, in the US academic media the books of Reinaldo Arenas were diffused as literature 'de testimonio', 'de denuncia', 'of political condemnation', in the belief that in this manner *the history of the literature of Cuba and of Cuban literature was being corrected*, when in fact all of that was no more than an obtuse way of obscuring the value and interest of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. This value and this interest does not exactly lie in Arenas having committed himself to writing a supposed 'true history' or 'unofficial version' of the public events of a Caribbean republic called Cuba, but in having brought about a new form of artistic *experimentation* in which any idea of literature as understood throughout the twentieth century has disappeared or, at the very least, that conception of writing which forms part of the history of the past, of an epoch whose fundamental concern was without doubt to count on a principle of truth.

⁶⁴ These equivocally paratextual pretensions of academic critics can be clearly observed regarding the search and chase for unpublished writings of Reinaldo Arenas. To cite or comment on materials of this type represents the sign distinguishing those who form the set of 'Arenas specialists' (and thus sell themselves to the publishing market) from those who 'play it by ear'.

2. The Sex of Angels

“The art of memory recalls us not to the life we have lost but to the life we have yet to live.” John Paul Eakin [1992: 229].

Viaje a La Habana is a novel in which the characters continually attempt to construct a space, to *obtain a territory* in which they can *imagine* an identity, where they can isolate a certain subjectivity without as a consequence losing awareness of change and movements. Sex here is a mere plot.

Nevertheless, much of the literary criticism devoted to this novel has not succeeded in crossing the threshold of a supposed 'homosexual identity', with which they say *Viaje a La Habana* was dealing [F. Soto, 1994b; Paul Julian Smith, 1996; D. Balderston/D. J. Gay, 1996]. This highlights once again the role of those literary critics who employ a code of academic rules of diffusion to read the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas. It is one thing to see what links can be established between a partial account of the auto/biographical story and the bibliographical narration (since isolated works of Arenas cannot exist) and another and very different thing to interpret the plots of some of the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas as confirmations of an idea (homosexuality) that belongs to the biological dimension which authors, like other human beings, generally have.⁶⁵ What

⁶⁵ It can even be said that, while accepting the possibility of speaking in a literary manner on homosexuality, Arenas himself disqualifies that in *Antes que anochezca* when he demonstrates his contempt 'for the homosexual world' [1992, 132].

has been termed 'the homosexuality of Reinaldo Arenas' is something which, when not viewed from the perspective of an auto/biographical story but viewed instead from the point of view of writing, from the point of view of a literature, lacks interest.

To quote F. Soto referring to *Viaje a La Habana*, 'Aunque cada relato tiene su propia anécdota, personajes y acción, los tres están unidos por un tema central: la búsqueda, consciente o inconsciente, de una identidad homosexual que representa la liberación.' [F. Soto, 1994b: 169]. For some it is sex, for others it is the island's governments; the fact is that this supposed idea of 'liberation' has been attributed in a repetitive and confused manner not only referring to Arenas's books but referring to Arenas himself, without ever reaching a clear understanding of who is who and what is what. 'The theme of homosexuality' in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas lacks interest or, to put it more precisely, is only an argument given by the context of reception (literary criticism, academic community) - which will later be analysed as *reconocimiento* - of some of the books attributed to him.

We do not find in Arenas an idea of literature dedicated to homosexuality as we do in such writers as Jean-Noël Pancrazi (whose 1987 review of *Encore une fois la mer* is very enlightening regarding conditions of reading Arenas in the French market) and other Europeans who lay claim to a 'gay literature'. The homosexuality which we find dealt with in the books attributed to the author Reinaldo Arenas is one of a number of critical fables [plots] which, with sarcasm and fury simultaneously, appear throughout the bibliographical narrative. The same could be said of the rural areas of eastern Cuba, of Havana, of sensibility under conditions of political oppression, of the sea,

In addition, why should Arenas' homosexuality matter or signify more than that of any other mortal? Of course, many respond, he is 'denouncing' and 'giving a voice to others': here we are already speaking then of Miguel Barnet and not of Reinaldo Arenas.

etc. The public homosexual militancy of the person identified by the name of Reinaldo Arenas is a matter constantly being resolved in this unstable account we know as auto/biographical and it is *only when we start from this point* that homosexuality as an argument or 'theme' is to be found linked to the bibliographical narration or to the fabrication of an author conventionally known by the name of Reinaldo Arenas.⁶⁶

There exists a fantasy, in the most fantastic sense of the term (φαντασία), in the minds of the academic literary critics which, in point of fact, has its origin in situations such as the one just described and which often produces amusing conclusions. Continuing with the chosen example of *Viaje a La Habana*, having had his say in a whole series of bibliographical comments on the fantastic genre (only touched upon absently-minded, as it were, by Arenas, on the other hand), F. Soto presents the issue in terms of a magic final question. 'Quisiera hacer una última observación extratextual antes de terminar. Al principio de este trabajo acoté la observación de T. Todorov de que en tiempos modernos el psicoanálisis ha acabado con ciertos tabúes que alimentaban lo fantástico. Si esto es verdad, pregunto entonces por qué recurrió Arenas a presentar el tema de la homosexualidad en un cuento fantástico.' [Soto, 1994b: 178]. This, without any doubt, results in the attribution of ideas of the literary critic to the author Reinaldo Arenas. In other words, 'the theme of homosexuality', from this perspective, runs throughout the entire *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, and therefore its presence in *Viaje a La Habana* is not to be wondered at -on the contrary, it would be odd if it were not to be found there. That 'Mona' should be a 'fantastic story' is a problem for Soto, not for Arenas who wrote (as he himself maintained

⁶⁶ This is exactly the opposite of what is proposed by literary critics such as F. Soto, who in an anthologised passage writes about *El asalto*, 'Clearly, the copulation with the mother, a societal taboo, can be read as a transcoding or displacement of the narrator's reaffirmation of his own (homo) sexuality.' [1994a, 102].

on various occasions) something that was difficult to define and whose organization into genres was a waste of time.

The reply to F. Soto's magic final question, evidently, is not only terrifyingly simple but converts *Viaje a La Habana* into a kind of 'manifesto' or sociological treatise:

Si los homosexuales y las lesbianas ganaron victorias en su lucha por la igualdad en los años sesenta y setenta, la década de los ochenta introdujo una nueva era de hostilidad y discriminación hacia estos grupos marginados a causa de la epidemia de SIDA. Visto desde esta perspectiva, no nos debe sorprender entonces que el autor, víctima de esta discriminación, escribiese un relato fantástico que presenta el tema de la homosexualidad como tabú reprimido. Con este relato, Arenas nos ha dejado, a mi entender, uno de los primeros ejemplos de literatura fantástica "gay" en la literatura hispanoamericana. [1994b, 179].

This thesis is concerned with opposing such a simplistic and deplorable a conclusion.

3. Essays in/of Dissidence

The idea of the *essay* in Reinaldo Arenas is a difficult issue. As a starting point for our consideration of the notion of essay let us use the book *Necesidad de libertad*. We will see then how the narratives attributed to Reinaldo Arenas that can be grouped together as essays are defined not by their argument or style but by the position that they occupy, firstly, as a function of the auto/biographical story of Arenas himself and, secondly, as a

function of the bibliographical narration which refers to him as an author.⁶⁷ If *Necesidad de libertad* is the perspective from which to define a notion of the essay, then those theses of the literary critics which are based purely on the essay (an essay defined by what it says regarding a supposed reality) lack basis. 'Los textos,' says one of the defenders of this thesis referring to *Necesidad de libertad* 'se pueden considerar como ensayos porque sus temas son trascendentes. Lo expresado, lejos de envejecer -como sucede con la información periodística- forma un conjunto de ideas que dan cuerpo a un pensamiento original, expresado literariamente.' [Triff, 1994: 184]. It is not the relative aptness of this classification which we are interested in but rather the usefulness of viewing thematically some narrations which by their very conditions of enunciation clearly demonstrate their paratextual functioning.⁶⁸ In other words, the arguments in themselves are less important than the final encounter, situation and significance of these selfsame arguments.

As a result, if this idea of essay, maintained chiefly by literary critics were to be accepted, general banalities and possible interesting historiographical aspects would emerge mixed together and scrambled.

La legitimación del discurso marginal del exilio que ha sido silenciado por el poder, la invitación a los intelectuales para que no apoyen con su prestigio al gobierno cubano, el homenaje a las figuras literarias que la reescritura de la historia marxista-leninista ha borrado del panorama cultural cubano y la desmitificación del discurso del poder en los medios culturales,

⁶⁷ It is interesting to observe how the author Arenas in *Necesidad de libertad* baptizes himself as an intellectual and how, years later, he employs this same work as a precedent which validates his credentials as an intellectual, as a writer capable of reflecting on what he writes and thinks.

⁶⁸ It is amusing to observe how ineffectually this definition of essay works. S. Triff [1994] announces that he will deal with works after *Necesidad de libertad*. However, his analysis is run through with constant allusions and references to *Necesidad de libertad* and all the other supposed 'later essays' end up turning around *Necesidad de libertad*, and not the reverse, as it was supposed to be.

son las facetas más importantes sobre las que se orienta el ensayo areniano. [Triff, 1994: 191].

If we were to accept this hotchpotch (or cocktail), we would say that Reinaldo Arenas was a journalist concerned with collective events and with the human composition of the leading classes who governed during the era which he lived through as a person. Is this what Arenas would understand as an essay?

Necesidad de libertad has been defined as an essay or 'essays' [Triff, 1994 and O. Ette, 1992]. Taking this book, as has already been suggested, in order to arrive at a definition of the essay, it could be said that in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas the essay functions as a kind of 'meta-relato' (a type of the *hypertexte* to which G. Genette [1982] refers) to the extent to which essays are situated within the paratextual space: their function is to speak about the books, about the historical account to which they might refer or in which they might inscribe themselves and offer a clear auto/biographical image and, indisputably, *to put together the paratext of his works as one organized account* (or indeed several). It should therefore come as no surprise that works appear here that date back to the Sixties, such as the response to the *Mundo Nuevo* review or the essay on Lezama which had already appeared in the *Gaceta de Cuba* in 1970 (in a censored form, according to Arenas himself [Soto, 1990]). These are examples which admit to no doubt concerning the idea of correction and re-location which inspired them.

Of himself as an author, Arenas says, 'testimonio de un intelectual disidente'. To conclude I would argue that the public offering-up of an opinion on controversial matters in an essay, is easier than attempting to see how this idea of the writings of a 'dissident intellectual' function in relation to the

author which he is above all, and to the bibliography attributed to him -since it should not be forgotten that *Arenas is there* (in the book, in the 'testimony'), *because he is a writer, because he is considered as an author*.

It is perhaps in connection with these accounts known as essays that the theses which explain the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas in terms of 'modernity' or 'postmodernity' demonstrate their high degree of specialization and their inability to highlight the consequences of Arenas' literary manoeuvres, and also their inability to engage in a detailed observation of an idea of literature which considers writing (or an idea of writing) as an element of order and temporalization. Consequently, the perspective which makes a genre out of 'the essays because their themes are transcendent' [Triff, 1994] must of necessity lead to the defence of a series of mass-media arguments. In other words, to define the idea of essay in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas starting from the point of a reception context (or, more precisely, of *reconocimiento*) established by literary and academic criticism seems a poor analytical tool. In order to avoid these misunderstandings, at a later point I will undertake the task of defining the idea of essay in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas using *Méditation de Saint Lazare* -a model, we might say, of what in Arenas *functioned* as an essay.

4. The Transgressing Romanticism of Arenas's Literary Critics

P. Rozencvaig states:

Sin embargo, el objeto fundamental de todo discurso no es sólo transferir conocimiento, sino transmitir este conocimiento según los valores, las actitudes y las opiniones del emisor en un momento dado. Esto requiere que se analice el aspecto extralingüístico del discurso, partiendo de las relaciones que existen entre la práctica discursiva y el aparato hegemónico

(sistema político y sus instituciones) dentro del cual se realiza dicha práctica. [P. Rozencvaig, 1986: 97].

If one were to accept this conjecture - leaving to one side the theoretical disquisitions regarding the problematical notion of discourse which is of no interest here - the only manner of approaching a literary work would be to approximate it to a history of literature taken as certain and true and in which would reside 'values, attitudes and opinions'.

The idea then of a supposed 'transmission of knowledge' adapts to a *historicist* certainty because it confirms faith in an apparent mission of scriptorial activity, that is, it offers 'knowledge'. This perspective is for an idyllic Enlightenment world, where sensibility and thought find agreement in the present. But it is not so, for the hypothesis being proposed regarding the contemporaneity exercised by Reinaldo Arenas: in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas any idea of knowledge - assumed to be, 'the fundamental object of all discourse' - is totally ignored. If a plot analysis of the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas (there is no need to go into the more complex perspective of a theory in the writing) could set out an itinerary for the reader, it would be that of a group of characters, settings and affective atmospheres in which the only effective 'transmission' between them (which is also a *contract of temporalization*, that is, a form of fabricating the past and the future, the present being always *consequence*) is the fatality of an inevitable suicide, of an exasperated sensibility beyond redemption and of a possible triumph over pure becoming, consisting in radicalizing its condition of incommunicability and of event with out any possible writing.

In other words it could be said that if every book is, as suggested, a representation of a given present, then one believes, on the one hand, that

writing is capable of saying what happens (that which develops in a given moment which is now) and, on the other hand, that which we call literature in Arenas not only concerns itself with representing this realistic and indisputable actuality (also known as 'hegemonic apparatus' or 'discursive practice', to mention only two cases) but also contains and apprehends certain values. The latter would then be received collectively (in some kind of collective entelechy) or individually (in a receptive and communicant 'I' who, ghost-like, would replace the historiographical and bookish quality of any notion of an author, trying to attribute to him a biological dimension he could never have). Nothing could be further removed from the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas than all these nineteenth-century conceptions of literature.

This nineteenth century idea of literature and what can be converted into literature is demonstrated clearly in such conclusive declarations as this: 'Hemos visto cómo la escritura areniana, surgida en el momento eclosivo de la producción narrativa cubana posrevolucionaria, hubo de caracterizarse prontamente por su dinámica transgresora y escandalizante dentro de las normativas ideológicas mantenidas y solicitadas por el sistema político y social de la Cuba revolucionaria...' [Béjar, 1987: 249-250]. The *exposition* of all the European theories in vogue serves no purpose if they are merely shown and presented as 'evidence', seeking through their very mention a legitimization of the epistemological basis of the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas which is far from actually satisfied. It is a sample-book method, undoubtedly functioning for the academic market, by *making it* obvious that one knows this or that well-known European critic, can read him in the original and can use it as a starting point for one's own 'theorizing' (about the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas in this case); quite unmistakably the commercial legitimacy promised by the coverage of this itinerary is pursued. What we call 'nineteenth century' is a bibliographical grouping whose fundamental

consideration consists in terming as 'literature' an entire narrative which offers images of communities and geographies whose complement was called 'society' or 'nation'. Thence, inter alia, all literature was considered of value when it could be *documented* and become an element of an institutional chronologization.⁶⁹ From this perspective, the insistence with which literary critics repeat the same procedure of analysis never ceases to amaze, especially when facing so solid an opposition as the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas offers to the slightest glimmer of romanticism. Undoubtedly the plaster calm attributed by Arenas to the historiographical character bearing the name of Jose Martí [1990c] could also be employed with reference to many of the academic literary critics who devote themselves to mentioning Reinaldo Arenas with mercantile intent.

To say that 'el eje que sostiene la narrativa de Reinaldo Arenas se apoya en un continuo manipuleo de la historia' [Rozenvaig, 1986: 107] is to offer a general conjecture with which we could probably assent initially. To add that there exists something like a 'referencialidad [que] se apoya primordialmente en las transformaciones que sufre el hecho histórico (verificable) al que se alude en el texto' [Rozenvaig, 1986: 107] is to situate the books of Reinaldo Arenas in a series of assumptions about academic literary criticism:

1. That there exists indisputable demonstrations known as 'historical fact' which would also constitute the 'historical context' [Rozenvaig, 1986] or reality of a given work (without clarifying what 'a work' is).

⁶⁹ Pierre Bourdieu [1992] suggests that, in the case of France, the origin of the beginning of academic predominance can be observed in this situation. That is, the moment at which the Academies began to decline and the exercise of this calendarization of the bibliographies began to be the principal labour of academic institutions and, later, of the so-called research institutes.

2. That there are 'fictional' writings which establish a dialogue with that 'historical context' - which is what tends to be called 'the <literaturization> of reality' in order to refer to Jorge Luis Borges [Béjar, 1987].
3. That there exists something known as 'ideology' : '...es bien sabido que el libro tiene un autor quien consciente o subconscientemente le filtra su ideología al texto' [Rozencvaig, 1986: 106] and that this permits us access to an author's intentions. '...una lectura ideológica del texto no puede pasar por alto la intención del autor...' [Rozencvaig, 1986: 107]. Likewise it makes it possible to speak of '[un] aparato ideológico que se instaura permanentemente en la narrativa del autor' [Rozencvaig, 1986: 107].

The majority of academic books and articles dedicated to what is conjecturally called the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas work upon these presuppositions, without taking into account the quantity, quality or variety of well-known (to the academic market) literary theories or names, which are used or handled. As Rozencvaig maintains in the introduction to her book on Arenas, 'Este trabajo quiere demostrar que las novelas de Arenas, a pesar de sus diferencias semánticas y/o estructurales, constituyen un cuerpo orgánico por el que filtra una visión de mundo en correspondencia con una ideología fija: la constante búsqueda de un espacio liberador, sede de incesantes transgresiones.' [1986, 7]. This leads us to believe that for some literary critics the *unity* of what we call the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas is not to be found in the narrative nature of its elements or in the purely historiographical condition of its possibilities, but rather that this *unity* is imparted by something termed 'set ideology' which would assuredly be 'the search for a liberating space'. Liberating what? A reality constituted and composed by '(verifiable) historical fact' [P. Rozencvaig, 1986: 105].

Béjar maintains in his introduction to an analysis of Reinaldo Arenas's work that 'con este entretejido lingüístico pluricursivo, es decir, con la *textualidad* de Arenas, América cifra otra vez su larga tradición de resistencia a la violación reduccionista del logos europeo, y su re-sentimiento opositivo a una palabra totalizadora que la substancia en foráneo y esférico nombre propio.' [Béjar, 1987: 11]. To put forward this conjecture and then devote 264 pages to recounting and citing the works of Gérard Genette, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and a whole host of European academics would seem to be a further easily foreseen result of the presuppositions already mentioned and which at no point appear to be discussed *starting from* Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* but, rather, taking advantage of the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas which, in this sense, offers an alibi that cannot be bettered - much as in the same sense, although with a different genesis, occurred with the *oeuvre* of Jorge Luis Borges. The less comical the situation of a literary work in these conditions -if Reinaldo Arenas ends up there being the unwelcome guest, as effectively he does- the more the analysis strikes me as carnivalesque.⁷⁰ It is a masquerade and carnival which assuredly turns on a

⁷⁰ The case of this literary critic constitutes a kind of standard applicable to many of the academic analysts who have dealt with Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre* and also resembles not only the situation of P. Rozencvaig and R. Valero but also that of F. Soto, who we will look at later and take as a mode of approach to Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre* characteristic of North American academic criticism. To put it more specifically, in 1985 the critic E. Béjar presented his PhD thesis on Arenas [<La textualidad de Reinaldo Arenas>, University of Massachusetts] and two years later published it in book form [*La textualidad de Reinaldo Arenas. Juegos de la escritura postmoderna*], with some articles on the argument published between both events.

In this same view Perla Rozencvaig is perhaps the best-known case (within 'Arenismo') owing to her publishing activity (articles, interviews, reviews). Above all, some of her publications on Arenas (there is at least one review of *El palacio* and an interview with Arenas before 1983) preceeding her thesis. As we shall see, the case of the critic F. Soto is very similar - a better example, even - although later. Rozencvaig's later writings which, as we conjectured of those critics occupied with Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre*, remain within the epistemic and interpretative frame set out in the same thesis, were in relation to the fact that the thesis was completed at Columbia University and not at a university of lesser standing in the market (as, for example Georgetown University where R. Valero presented his thesis on Arenas). <The fictionalization of history in three novels of Reinaldo Arenas> was the title of this literary critic's thesis presented in 1983 and published, with some variants of no epistemic importance, with the title of *Reinaldo Arenas: narrativa de transgresión*, in 1986.

Roberto Valero offers a similar situation as regards the *academic market standard* to which we are referring. He presented a thesis <Humor y desolación en la obra de Reinaldo Arenas> in 1988 at Georgetown University and published it in 1991, having obtained a prize in Miami, with the title of *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas*.

presupposition of a surprisingly elementary nature : 'the <literaturization> of reality' [Béjar, 1987: 11].

What the use of these presuppositions of academic literary criticism impedes and obstructs is any approach to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* in the main area of interest which is neither its conversion to 'political' or 'historical discourse' [Rozencvaig, 1986] nor its transformation to 'testimony' [Soto, 1990 and Koch, 1994]. What would be interesting is to attempt to differentiate what distinguishes Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, both from other ideas of previous literatures and from other conceptions about scriptorial activity. These two notions are inseparable in Arenas, as we shall see. What always distinguishes Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is that he not only produces history as narrative elaboration of the past, as so many other authors have done, but also questions and works upon the *rules* of that historization. Reinaldo Arenas works upon the very idea of historiography or, more exactly, on how the narratives we call 'literature' are in reality matters of 'the history of literature' and, even more so, how these narratives constitute every possible idea of history (to the extent to which this last constitutes the past and forms of memory). Unquestionably there is in Arenas a certainty *from which he writes*: every 'fact' is a scriptorial creation, if to refer finally to

Felix Lugo Nazario, lastly, is another case. <La alucinación y otros recursos literarios en las novelas de Reinaldo Arenas> is the title of his PhD thesis presented at the University of Puerto Rico in 1989 and the book published in 1995 bears exactly the same title. He has also published an 'interview with the author' and some reviews which he mentions in his book.

If we were to term 'Arenismo' the group of literary and academic critics who claim to dedicate themselves to Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre*, then one could say that 'Arenismo' in fact repeats a commercial pattern of the North American academic world which takes very specific and rigid forms. My hypothesis in this regard is that these critics are talking more of this academic system and of their own literary formation than of what could be called Reinaldo Arenas. It is for this reason that I have introduced, it will be remembered, the idea of the character *Arenitas*. In other words, to launch oneself on a study of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* presents the problem that most of his analysts are or were literary critics of the North American academic community dedicated to 'Hispanic Studies'. That is to say, the analysis of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* signifies understanding this last as a product of the North American academic market - of its forms and its limits - and only from this necessary statement and description can we try to attain another perspective since, whether we like it or not, this academic market (including all its *Arenitas*) is a part of what we call Reinaldo Arenas's bibliographical narrations, or if preferred, a part of the paratext of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

certain 'facts' proves of any use in a world where knowledge and sensibility appear never to meet. All of this is to be found exactly at the antipodes of the presuppositions exercised by much of the literary criticism concerning itself with the author Reinaldo Arenas.

Finally, what is astonishing about works of academic literary criticism such as those mentioned is that after an unfolding of *recherché* and complex literary theories (differentiation of voices, intertextuality, distinguishing discourses, putting forward of schemes, constant bibliographical referentiality, etc), in actual fact all the analysis is sustained by two or three hypotheses whose obtuse rudimentary nature does not appear credible. These include, for instance, the proposal of the existence of 'historical facts', of 'ideologies', of 'historical contexts', etc.: vague entelechies whose nineteenth century nature distances them from any link with Arenas, a historiographical personage who postdates what we conventionally still call the twentieth-century.

When P. Rozencvaig [1986], for instance, concludes her analysis quoting Roland Barthes saying that the history of a novelist is the history of a theme and its variations, and one reads this assertion at the end of a work of 100 pages which has devoted itself to proving epistemologically exactly the opposite, one cannot help but wonder at the *raison d'être* for such a paradox. When, for example, E. Béjar dedicates 264 pages (from some of which, as Quevedo used to say of Luis de Góngora, owls and bats sometimes seemed to emerge) to puns, Latin tags and opposite mentions of well-known European teachers, we discover, for example that the dedication of *Celestino* does not refer to a character bearing the name 'Maricela Cordovez' (a cousin, as far as we know, of the Cuban peasant called Reinaldo Arenas [R. Valero: 1991]) but rather that this name is in fact something called an 'isotope of

rebelliousness' [1987, 159] and is linked to a seventeenth century Andalusian poet, that it is, we are told, an '<antro> de signo poético' [1987, 159]. He concludes with such terms as 'antidialectic procedure' [250], 'political system' [250], 'ideological norms' [249], 'Arenas' novelistic discourse' [253], 'history's cohabiting and monumental space' [255] and others such. One cannot then refrain from wondering how to understand this (con)fusion where what the literary critic wishes to make for himself, in the name of the academic market, seems to matter more than what can be said of interest regarding the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas. When, for instance, Soto [1990] says that '*El portero* unfolds in the year 1992' and that 'the parodic intention of undermining the fifth centenary of the <discovery> of America is obvious' [1990, 25], one has to wonder how to read that 1992 now that no one remembers the 'five hundredth anniversary', other than to advertise a commercial fair held in the Iberian peninsula or some elegant edition of books of minimal circulation.⁷¹ It is impossible to cease to wonder how, faced with the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, there are still literary critics who insist upon interpreting a literary *oeuvre* in terms as naïve as 'society', 'political system', 'Latin America', etc.: that is to say, literary critics who believe in the tangible nature of the real as given in the content of information imparted by mass media communications.

There exists in Arenas a dimension which is not the biological one which greatly concerns the analysts of Cubanism and which these presuppositions of academic literary criticism never deal with, or discuss. This is Arenas's appreciation of an end which does not only relate to the plots of his known books but also to the exhaustion of literary experience itself. What strikes us as most remarkable in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas is his concern with

⁷¹ Paradoxically, the first edition in Spanish of *El portero* [1989] was the product of an agreement between the publishing house Dador and the Spanish State society called Quinto Centenario (now dissolved).

the possibility of writing inside an epoch in which the meaning of all that used to be understood as literary criticism has disappeared.

5. Exercises in style

The *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, with the *paratextualité* which he uses and considers, demonstrates in a far clearer manner than other narratives in circulation in the Spanish-speaking market, that between the narratives referred to as 'historical', 'political' (journalistic, sociological) and 'literary' there exists only a difference in style -which has to do with the fact that, obviously, those that are literary possess a quality and quantity of resources, in addition to a capacity for movement (for change) which none of the others possesses. The situation in the Spanish language market is that 'literary' means any narrative, regardless of any truth principle, a fact which Arenas uses in order to make every imaginable narrative count as literary.

And this is also the originality of what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*: if 'experience of the world' [P. Ricoeur, 1983-5 and H. Blumenberg, 1996] is, on the one hand, a biological dimension with no possible writing and, on the other, a perception which finds no reference in any thought, then not only the provisional nature and imaginary quality (of image) of every I (process of subjectivization) becomes obvious (hence Arenas's declaration that 'the author in reality no longer exists' [Soto, 1990: 51]) but the scriptorial activity itself is converted into an exploration of the uncertain to the extent that it draws up affective maps which function as a 'horizon of expectation' of what might happen, of what we can expect from a present in constant evolution which cannot be immediately grasped cognitively.

More simply, if the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas are 'literature', it is not because they are included on the fiction lists of the Spanish language publishing houses, nor because the cover flaps assure us that Arenas is a writer (of fiction) and this book or that is a novel, but rather because Arenas develops a writing of 'visual literature' [O. Ette, 1992]. The exercise of this writing imposes a conception of space, of the very limits of what can be communicated of perception, where without doubt the validity (verisimilitude) of the narratives is only given as conjecture and with the precision of images, names and words as its very resource, where the differences to be found are *stylistic* ones. For example, so-called 'Cuban history' is a narrative with a set literary style (or of a collection of these) plus some stereotypical characters and places or, to put it more directly, Cuban history thus termed is quite simply a literary style. To understand this one need only read Arenas's descriptions of Jose Martí [see Arenas 1986a, 1991a and 1992].

6. The Vision of Arenas in Roberto Valero

In 1991, Roberto Valero writes that

Arenas -aun vivo- se convirtió en un mito que plantea, simplemente, que su obra es anticomunista y patriótica, según el exilio, y anticomunista, homosexual y antipatriótica, según datos de la Cuba castrista. Desgraciadamente, ambas tendencias dañan su extraordinaria obra porque él cultivó esos temas y a la vez los destruyó. Su labor era de dinamitero enloquecido, arremeter contra toda autoridad, contra toda tradición o limitación a la libertad. Los que lean *Leprosorio* sin tapujos, podrán descubrir lo que planteo; es un libro que molesta a los seudointelectuales por los cuatro costados. [1994b, 230].

This is an interesting general description because in this analysis of *Leprosorio*, even if he does not get round to postulating it openly, R. Valero suggests the idea of the reterritorialization carried out by Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* or, more exactly, the presence of another territory which is no longer Cuba as everyone understands it.

Uno de los objetivos esenciales de la obra de Arenas es arremeter contra la autoridad; el país donde se nace es una autoridad, nos impone un idioma, una cultura, un modo de comportarnos. Algunas naciones son más autoritarias que otras y considero que Cuba es una Gran Autoridad. No es sorprendente que al final de *El asalto*, que cierra la pentalogía areniana, su proyecto más ambicioso, el tirano y la madre sean la misma persona. [1994b, 229].

Indiscriminate use of narratives of various types with the object of undermining their own supports, with the object of *changing the manner and mode of reading them*: here we have the reterritorialization drawn up scriptorially by Arenas. This reterritorialization is also the drawing up of a distance.

En "Leprosorio", así como en *El color del verano*, Arenas deja testimonio fehaciente de su repulsión por "la patria" y sus compatriotas: "Sin un glorioso pasado para aborrecerlo, sin una legendaria cultura para afirmarnos, sin antiguos museos ni regios monumentos que demoler ¿cómo pues adaptarnos al avance del progreso, a la gran demolición, al derrumbe, sin su requisito fundamental: algo para derrumbar?" ("Leprosorio", 11) "...las tres características absolutamente ineludibles que definen la Isla: superficialidad, inconstancia y pereza. Superficialidad hasta tal punto superficial que nos impide ver y valorar nuestra inconstancia y nuestra pereza..." (idem, 15) [Valero, 1994b: 229].

R. Valero senses, in his 'Vision de Cuba en *Leprosorio*' [1984] this use of space in relation to a theory of writing but does not get round to postulating it because, I believe, there is in Valero a mode of understanding the literary which impedes this. That is, Valero believes *Leprosorio* to be more linked to the history of the ruling classes and of the governments at the time in which it was published as a book than to the set of narratives which we conventionally know as the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas. Thus he talks of it as being 'la obra de mayor fuerza política hasta esa fecha junto con el cuento 'Termina el desfile' (1981)' [1994b, 225]; and also 'El propósito de ambos [he refers to *Leprosorio* and *Termina el desfile*] es desenmascarar la propaganda castrista' [1994b, 225] instead of studying other more interesting aspects at greater depth, as when he maintains: '...*Leprosorio*, como tantas obras de Arenas, es una atrocidad festiva, un frío carnaval, como diría Umberto Eco' [1994b, 226], or when he states that '[Arenas] utilizó su vida como material literario...' [1994b, 228].

Searching for the whys, the hows and the whens of such questions as these, R. Valero's work might well have overcome that limitation of most literary critics which consists of linking the books attributed to an author to the contents of the messages of mass media communication (what is commonly called current news) at the time and period when the book came on the market. Because, when it comes down to it, 'Castro', 'the Cuban Revolution', etc. are -in Valero- no more than accounts spread by a huge communication media. Any other dimension, as Arenas himself suggested, belongs to personal awareness or to that literary writing whose *tempo* is definitely not measured by the calendar of Havana or of the *Miami Herald*. 'El autor,' insists R. Valero 'ha lanzado una demoledora condena al régimen castrista. Quizás hasta esa fecha (1976) no exista un libro cubano que una con tanta maestría la denuncia humana y política con los altos valores literarios que

tiene *Leprosorio*.' [1994b, 231]. If instead of voicing this conjecture, which favours the relationship of the literary market to the events created by the mass media of communication, Roberto Valero had tried to define the nature of that territorialization produced by the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, and which undoubtedly can no longer be called 'Cuba' - if this other literary perspective had been employed, perhaps today we would have the critical corpus about Arenas which is lacking, that is to say, a *biobibliographical* analysis which could begin with the following conjecture, 'El hablante, como el autor, no se identifica con nadie ni con nada. Este aspecto es el más desolador y peligroso no sólo de *Leprosorio* sino de la obra de Arenas.' [R. Valero, 1994b: 232].

7. A Pragmatics of Writing

Arenas's books, especially the series known as the 'pentagonía', assume a dialogue with the narratives commonly known as 'history'. In this dialogue there is no adjectivization of such narrations but rather an indiscriminate use of them, which of itself constitutes the evaluation of them. The gratuitousness which runs through the 'pentagonía', relating to all stable temporalizations and rigid value orders, contaminates the narratives themselves through its use. The narratives' definition as 'history' is, as it happens, based on a rigid and stable temporalization and also on the belief in a final and possible truth. When a literary critic, for example, says, 'La novela se desarrolla en un momento histórico concreto, la lucha revolucionaria contra el régimen batistiano' [Soto, 1990: 14], he is presupposing this final and possible truth upon which any idea of literature will be inscribed. On the contrary, in what we term Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, what the writing is in fact producing is an exploitation of the meanings which the historical narratives (never one but several, multiple and

heterogeneous) bring into play starting from the exercise of this search for temporalization and veracity. That is to say, the novel does not 'develop in a specific historical moment' but exploits the historical belief in the existence of 'specific historical moments'. The use of names and circumstances in Reinaldo Arenas is always subordinated to what could be called the pragmatics of writing.

In Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* there is no conceptualization of what is understood as narratives - 'testimonio', 'commitment', 'fictionalization' of the real - that demonstrates adherence to institutions, political ideas, governments, etc. In terms of Arenas's *oeuvre*, *such a programme for narrative would not be literature but journalism*. According to Arenas, 'Ese tipo de cosa interesa mucho al Estado porque no son en realidad novelas, son testimonios que se llegan a escribir en forma de libro.' [Soto, 1990: 55]. In Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* there are not only concepts but multiple 'images' (the idea of 'visual literature' postulated by Arenas himself will be analysed later) and, above all, scriptorial activity. More than anything else Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is *a pragmatics of writing at a time* (the contemporary one, as we shall see) *when the very idea of literature has disappeared*.⁷²

The narrations attributed to the name of Reinaldo Arenas do not, as literary critics suppose, *legitimise* a kind of national supra-narrative of Cuba's

⁷² Pragmatic (from *πραγμα* - affair, business) was a law or mandate given by a king or emperor dealing with a particular matter. What is interesting about this is the written character that pragmatics acquires where the force of the law (*imperium lex*) was the writing itself: it is law because it is written. One of the most famous pragmatic instances in the Spanish American colonies was that referred to as 'los diez días' that is, when a written notice of 1584 (printed in Lima, in the Colegio de la Compañía de Jesús and considered 'el primer impreso americano') decided to take ten days off the month of December in order to implement the Gregorian calendar. Writing, form and temporalization constitute, as far as the narrations we call Hispano-American history are concerned, part of one movement. Lezama Lima undoubtedly inscribes himself within this *figuration* (and probably we could investigate there to find the origin of his conception of the baroque) and possibly what represents one of the few fundamental elements linking Lezama Lima to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is the idea of an 'imago' as the *driving force* of any notion of *oeuvre* or, rather, of any notion of scriptorial activity.

history - carrying out, or, as they say, telling, what a supposed official history could never have done - starting from a distinction between what is true and what isn't. This is rather as if the interest of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* resided in his having told 'what really happened' [see for example the interpretation of *Antes que anochezca* in Paul Julian Smith, 1996, and also the preference for 'history' in G. Zaldívar, 1977]. It seems dubious to me that this interpretation should be applied to Reinaldo Arenas. That it should, what is more, have been put forward during the lifetime of the person Reinaldo Arenas seems more than suspicious for someone who declared, 'No sólo ya cuestiono el tiempo y la estructura de la novela, sino que también me cuestiono a mí mismo como autor.' [Soto: 1990, 50].

Reinaldo Arenas's work is that of scribe in the literal sense of the word - simultaneously hermeneut and copyist. To put it another way: in the *biobibliographical* set we call the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, if there is one thing that is constant, it is undoubtedly the image of an author (gradually converted into another narrator) who does not position himself, as might be expected, outside and above the books attributed to him but appears in their very centre. Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is a visual literature executed from a viewpoint, a visual space, external to every text presented as a book - text in the most elemental sense of matter (one could say, physicality) defined as alphabetic elaboration (some would say, 'scriptorial weaving'). Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is a scriptorial activity carried out with a paratext as its departure point, not only in the employment of paratextual resources but, above all, as regards the very conception of what is possible in literary terms. How to write in a world where the aesthetic experience we used to call 'literature' has disappeared is the question running through all Arenas's writings [see Arenas, 1980b: interview; 1990b: 45 y ff. and, more theoretically, Bauman 1989; Luhmann, 1992 and Virilio, 1980].

8. The Paper 'I' and Horizons of Reading

'...la realidad no puede ser comprendida en su totalidad, sino solamente desde el punto de vista del individuo...' <Celestino y yo> [R. Arenas: en *Unión*, La Habana, 1967].

In 1987 Arenas stated, 'A mí me interesan fundamentalmente dos cosas en el mundo de la narrativa. Uno, es la exploración de mi vida personal, de las experiencias personales, de mis sufrimientos, de mis propias tragedias. Y dos, el mundo histórico.' [Soto, 1990: 47]. Based upon the statements such as this some literary critics have concluded that Arenas creates 'homosexual literature' at the same time as 'literature of denunciation or witness' [Koch, 1994; Soto, 1994b]. Another of the purposes of this thesis is to oppose this hasty conclusion.

For the moment it can be put schematically like this: 'the exploration of personal experiences' is one matter, and the relation which this exploration (the *adventuring* which Arenas indicates as one of his preferences should perhaps be read in the exploratory sense) establishes (or fails to establish) with a notion of literature and writing is another and very different matter. Many of the literary critics dealing with the work of Reinaldo Arenas are in the habit - mistaken in my judgement - of automatically associating what Arenas calls 'personal experience' with the objectives, ends and possibilities of 'the literary', and, as we seen seeing, it is more accurate to talk of a 'scriptorial activity' in Arenas rather than a literary exercise. Further more, what Arenas calls (or understands as) 'the historical world' should not be supposed unquestioningly to be identical to what academic communities call 'history' or 'historical discourse' [E. Béjar, 1987]. This historical world of

which Arenas speaks is more precisely a *tiempo de relato* - rather like the *point de vue voyageur* of W. Iser [1975], which is also an *activité imageante* on route to constituting ceaselessly the *horizon d'attente* [R. Koselleck, 1996] which has already been posited as one of the prime reasons for Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

There is in fact in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* a literary conception directing the scriptorial activity as a *figuration* of the experience of the world [P. Ricoeur, 1983-5]. It is for this reason, and not for reasons of 'historical witness' or *gay* militancy, that the problem of linking (or not linking) perception (experience of the world) and thought (scriptorial activity, narrativity) becomes so pressingly urgent and desperate.

Another aspect to be considered here is that the idea of dedication to 'personal experience' and to 'the historical world' becomes confused from the moment in which all possible notions of 'I' - be it author, writer or character - are composed as a *narrative identity* [P. Ricoeur, 1983-5].

It is also worth noting that, Arenas at no point says that he is attempting to tell what has *happened* to him (what *is happening*, strictly speaking) or to recount his intimate life ('biological' life). What Arenas does *literally* is to construct events. Hence the mistake of those who read the account of Arenas's sexual adventures as an intimate confession [see for example Paul Julian Smith, 1996] carried out publicly and not as the provision or construction of events, useful to the auto/biographical story in terms of paratextual functioning, and availing itself of certain aspects of the Spanish language publishing market - not to mention the general literary and publishing market. One need only reflect, for instance, on the fact that the first edition of *Antes que anochezca* was published in French before it was in

Spanish and, what is more, the Spanish version was carried out on the basis of the French Julliard edition [L. Hasson, 1994].

There is, on the contrary, as we have said, in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* (above all in *Antes que anochezca*) a fierce satire of the ethical or permanent possibilities of that knowledge which employs the grotesque exhibition of certain carefully selected events (including sexual activity); and on the other hand, there exists an absolute silence regarding affectivity or, more precisely, there exists a physical and biological conception of sentimentality where it is clear, even since the publication of *Celestino antes del alba* in 1967, that there is no possible name or 'literature' for the emotions, and that *poetic knowledge* (read in terms of Arenas, the development of Lezama or Borges [Soto, 1990]) is in fact the sole specific means with which to confront an occurrence in the present that always eludes our grasp, disturbing and violent.⁷³

9. More and more Martyrs

'Nunca se sabe, a donde uno puede llegar. O se sabe, y es mucho peor. Por eso quizás, sea necesario, de vez en cuando, hablar...' *Otra vez el mar* [Arenas, 1982b: 11-12].

The literary critic F. Soto states, 'It is not my intention simply to equate Arenas's aesthetic work with his life. However, I also do not support the equally naive position that pretends that a work of art has no relationship whatsoever to the individual who produced it and the society in which it was created.' [1994a, 8-9]. If anything is clear from the writings of Reinaldo

⁷³ Constructing and maintaining a 'horizonte de espera' is perhaps the most basic form of this *poetic knowledge* in Arenas's work.

Arenas it is, precisely, that any idea of 'society' has evaporated. That is, if one were to take into account at all the novels attributed to Reinaldo Arenas in order to analyse what we are calling the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, this consideration - this absence perhaps not of a *socius* but certainly of a vague notion of 'the social' - ought to be a relevant point.⁷⁴

Consequently, to speak of 'the society in which it was created' constitutes a confused abstraction which serves no useful purpose. From the same vague perspective 'Arenas's aesthetic work' and also 'his life' are spoken of. In a seventeenth century French literary biography one could perhaps understand the sense of 'aesthetic work' and of 'his life' referring to a court author, but to employ these vague terms to refer to the relation between auto/biographical story, bibliographical narration and the author's image would not seem to be a very good start for *The Pentagonía*, Soto's book on Reinaldo Arenas [see Appendix 4 (volume 2) for a more theoretical discussion regarding the idea and notion of 'pentagonía']. If it is a question of defining a 'genre', of presenting an idea of 'realistic' literature, we already have for this purpose works by R. Barthes, M. Blanchot and others, produced twenty or thirty years ago, not to mention that dissimilar group of Russian analysts and pseudonyms identified as the 'Russian formalists' [T. Todorov, 1966].

On this critical pathway *The Pentagonía* has nothing new to offer (as is the case with the great majority of literary critics working on Arenas) apart from the call for an analytic reading, and it is not actually on this that the promotion of this book is based (compared to earlier books dealing with

⁷⁴ In the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, in the plots offered by them, in his writing, there is not to be found a conception of society but rather a reference to collectivities or groups whose uniting link - what we call *socius* - is almost always terror or violence. In this sense, as has already been commented upon, *El portero* is a book attributed to Reinaldo Arenas which establishes various conjectures about a contemporaneity. How are we to perceive, how are we to elaborate a sensitivity in a world where every idea of collectivity has disappeared and only miniscule communities survive huddling together through terror and violence? This is perhaps the most fascinating question thrown up by these conjectures.

Arenas, this is the first one to emerge from a public limited company and be distributed to the commercial market in hardback with professional care taken over its design and typography).

And it is upon this basis, from this proposed reading, that the first obvious comments are undoubtedly produced which presage the epistemological misunderstandings around which the academic critics revolve (in this case, Soto) in relation to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. An alternative epistemology has yet to be fully constructed in the field of literary studies [see for example Luhmann, 1986 and Maturana, 1995]. 'The fact that Arenas consistently went back to writing novels after exploring other literary forms indicates his predilection for this broadly encompassing, highly flexible, and ever changing genre.' [1994a, 3]. We can read the same statement in various writings attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, including the interview conducted by F. Soto himself in 1987 [Soto, 1990]. Why expound as a conclusive argument something that everyone can read in the author in question? And further, Soto continues, 'I demonstrate how the culture-specific ideological circumstances of the Revolution turned the Cuban documentary novel into a state-sanctioned tradition whose basic tenets Arenas singularly subverted and called into question through his literary voice.' [1994a, 7]. This platitude requires no demonstration since it is repeated time and again in the journalistic works which comment on the books of Reinaldo Arenas.

What actually occurs is an extreme confusion between analytical precision and a summary of the literary critics' idea of 'literatura hispanohablante'. To continue with the example we have been analysing, it deals more with Soto himself and the academic community within which his writings are inscribed than it does with the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas. Consequently the idea of literature displayed could not be other than a version of the

romanticism which prevails amongst literary critics. 'Unlike recorded documents, fiction has the particular gift of being able to portray life in its full immediacy and brilliance; it is not merely a recording of life, but a vivid form of life itself.' [1994a, 7]. We find ourselves yet again in nineteenth-century meanderings: *writing (écriture) can make becoming ('devenir') into the present*, in other words the function of writing is to turn the evanescent and incomplete into something solid enough to be called the present. Nothing could be more opposed to the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

10. Introduction to *The Pentagonía*

To advocate discovery or bibliographical updating as a principle of legitimacy of an essay always carries two risks. The first refers to the need for a slow and precise work, a need which, when the author in question is what is known as 'contemporary', can be seriously compromised. Much of the work of literary criticism carried out in recent years, can be seen in this light - principally in North American universities where the norm is *trabajar en velocidad* (alongside a sort of constant syndrome of the new, of the newly out, be this novels, essays or theories). The second risk, undoubtedly related to the first, refers to the problem of a reduced space for the book and a lack of time (with which these publications are put together and published) leading to the need for urgent conclusions, within what is now a typographical scheme: hypothesis - display of bibliography - conclusion.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ An interesting aspect of this rush by literary critics appears in *The Pentagonía*: F. Soto bases his work on the English versions of *El asalto* and *El color del verano*, books that by that time had not been published either in English or Spanish (it is now known that the Spanish versions appeared in 1991) while the English version of *El asalto* was published in 1994; *El color del verano*, despite being announced by the English editor, had not yet been published). Therefore it can be said that the critic himself is contributing in this way to keep alive one of the many 'librescas' paradoxes of Arenas's work: *El asalto* and *El color del verano* first existed associated to a paratext -in Soto's work, in reviews, in the very announcements of the author- and only afterwards did they become books.

'Immediately after the publication of his second novel, *El mundo alucinante* (1969), Reinaldo Arenas (1943-1990) began to receive critical attention as one of Latin America's most innovative and promising literary voices. The success of this novel, hailed by Latin American as well as European critics for its intelligence and wit, catapulted this young Cuban writer to international status.' [1994a, 1]. Arenas's success in the international literary market was basically due to the *succès de prestige* of the French edition of *El mundo alucinante* and not so much to the sparse diffusion of the three Mexican editions (over nine years) and the two Argentinian ones known before 1980.⁷⁶ Let us call it a *succès de prestige* because the supposed 'popularity' and reputation of the author bearing the name of Reinaldo Arenas was in fact to be found exclusively within certain minority frames, chiefly intellectual and academic minorities. Despite the fact that *El mundo alucinante* was published by Seuil in 1968 and was to receive some favourable mention within the same French publishing ambiance, it must also be considered :

1. that the second French edition was not produced until eleven years later;
2. that the edition in English took another three years to appear (and the second edition was not brought out until 1976);
3. that something similar happened with *O Mundo Alucinante*, the Portuguese version published in 1971;
4. and that, finally, the German Suhrkamp edition came out fourteen years after the first edition.

⁷⁶ As will be seen later, the very composition of what we will call the Spanish language publishing market means that a *succès de prestige* in France is an absolute guarantee of academic and intellectual prestige, above all in the sectors of such communities devoted to literary criticism. It is here, I believe, that the arguments to understand Reinaldo Arenas's paradoxical situation should be sought.

This panorama does not reveal what would be called a popular novel, despite the statement of the literary critic F. Soto that 'Arenas's texts have enjoyed popularity in the Spanish-speaking world' [Soto, 1994a: 155]. What received mass media diffusion and a certain notoriety were actually different auto/biographical accounts (Claude Couffon's article in *Le Monde* [1969] only serves as further confirmation of this) of a supposed writer whose works were unknown - above all before 1980 and, although this situation changed after Reinaldo Arenas's arrival in the United States, the tendency remained unchanged. The proof of this is that, seven years after his death, the only book attributed to the author Reinaldo Arenas which has achieved diffusion in the market is *Antes que anochezca*, the autobiography having gone through at least five Iberian editions in five years.

On another front the academic works devoted to Arenas before 1980, as has been seen, were very scarce, putting into question 'the critical attention' of which F. Soto speaks, certainly in the period prior to 1980. To appraise the auto/biographical story of the author Reinaldo Arenas in the sixties and seventies, from the perspective of the same story's success in the United States, is an unfortunate evaluation (purporting to be analysis) which, as will be seen, is repeated over and over again, not just among those devoted to the analysis of what is known as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* but also apparently a constant in the operation of those academic communities concerned with so-called 'Hispano-American literature'.

There is in *The Pentagónia* a whole series of generalizations regarding Reinaldo Arenas's auto/biographical story which goes with the tone the author wishes to impart to Reinaldo Arenas's profile. Saying that Arenas's childhood was not a privileged one is not the same as believing that Arenas ate earth because he was hungry. One commentator has remarked that no

truly wretched family in Cuba owns cows, as did Arenas's grandfather. *Antes que anochezca* should not be believed as 'testimony' (there is no possible witness of transformation) but read as a *game* (a scriptorial activity) which attempts to construct an auto/biographical story in relation to a series of books attributed to that same story.⁷⁷

F. Soto continues, 'As an idealistic teenager he joined the revolutionary rebel forces of Fidel Castro and fought against the dictatorial government of Fulgencio Batista.' [1994a, 2]. Reading some of the interviews thoroughly and comparing them with *Antes que anochezca*, one can easily conclude that this was one of the first incidents exploited by Arenas:

...entonces no me aceptaron. (...) L.H.: ¿Por tu tierna edad?
 R.A.: No, porque sobre todo había que llevar un rifle. Me dijeron que tenía que matar a un guardia y venir con el rifle, toda esa historia es real. Cuando llegué [de regreso] a mi casa, mi familia, que no padecía de la discreción, sino como todas las mujeres que vivían en esta comunidad eran muy escandalosas, ya le habían dicho a todo el pueblo que me había alzado con los rebeldes -dieron unos gritos terribles; había entrado todo el mundo, registraron la casa, y cuando vine me dijeron: 'Tienes que irte corriendo, si descubren que estás aquí te matan.' Entonces tuve que volver otra vez con los rebeldes y ya me quedé por las lomas -con gente que había conocido, parientes, pero nunca como soldado porque no tenía arma- con tan buena suerte que estuve allá unos seis o siete meses. En el 59 triunfaron, Batista huyó y fue entonces cuando yo bajé otra vez para Holguín. [L. Hasson, 1992a: 39].

Not only, then, did he not join the rebel forces nor fight against Batista, he simply spent six months 'in the hills', - another failed attempt to return to

⁷⁷ The theory of writing which, as we shall see, runs through all that we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is governed by that phrase which can be read in *El portero* and which has generated so many misunderstandings: 'El juego en fin es la medida de todas las cosas.' [1989a, 131].

Holguín, where he had moved his family.⁷⁸ The attribution to him of motivation so appropriate to an idealistic teenager also seems ridiculous in the light of what there is to be read on this period in *Antes que anochezca*: Arenas was looking for any excuse, motive or cause to flee the oppressive and overbearing atmosphere in which he lived day to day. Is it not the case that there are many suicides and wretches populating the novels attributed to the author Reinaldo Arenas?

To quote F. Soto, 'In the mid-1960s, when the Castro regime began to openly persecute homosexuals, Arenas turned away from the Revolution.' [1994a, 2]. There is no doubt that Arenas always entertained suspicion of authority, and particularly of government. But the point is that not only did Arenas continue working for the State until at least 1970 but he also published four reviews in the *Gaceta de Cuba* in that same year -one of these being the famous 'El reino de la imagen' about Lezama Lima which becomes so relevant the moment we start considering the idea of 'visual literature' which Arenas himself was later to propose. There was even a publication in 1971, apparently the last until his flight in 1980, titled

⁷⁸ Three years prior to this declaration, in a *gacetilla* distributed by the publishers Argos Vergara along with the published *Otra vez el mar*, could be read, 'En 1958, ya en Holguín y bajo la tiranía del Dictador Fulgencio Batista, decide, por aburrimiento y fatiga, alzarse con los Rebeldes castristas. Permanece alzado todo el resto del año en la Sierra de Gibara bajo las órdenes del comandante Eddy Zuñol, campesino y combatiente de la zona, quien en 1977 se suicidó de un balazo en la cabeza.' [Valero, 1991: 13]. According to R. Valero the *gacetilla* was written by Arenas himself, although at no point does his signature appear to confirm his authorship. Its title is perhaps a confirmation of R. Valero's hypothesis, because of its Arenian style: 'Cronología (irónica, pero cierta)'.

The ironic tone assures us that Arenas was mocking (and amusing himself): he joins the rebels through boredom and claims to have served under the orders of a certain Eddy Zuñol who alone can confirm the truth of this event but cannot be considered because he is dead. And that this dead man should also be a suicide and a peasant is undoubtedly one of Arenas' jests (as if to say 'Come on, ask some peasant, the guy in charge of the cemetery, or Castro himself...').

The *gacetilla* is definitely another of the games that Arenas had already begun to play (we are now at the end of 1982, almost two years after the flight from Cuba) around his books and their relation to the auto/biographical account. To say that it is a *fake* lacks relevance, for by that token every auto/biographical account is a *fake* '[l'autobiographie] est' maintains P. Lejeune, 'un récit retrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité.' [1975, 14].

'Discreta reverencia' which appeared in a catalogue of the 'Galería Hotel Habana Libre'.

'Having been censored in Cuba for so long, the author, as if intoxicated with his newly found freedom, began to write prodigiously: novels, short stories, poetry, dramatic pieces, essays, newspaper articles.' [1994a, 2]. This is not exactly the case since, as the F. Soto should know, most of the manuscripts published by Arenas during his exile had already acquired written form in what for the sake of convenience we have called 'the Cuban period'. Let us see what Arenas himself has to say, in 1987: 'Tengo cosas aun escritas hasta en Cuba que aun no he pasado y quisiera trabajar en ellas.' [F. Soto, 1990: 59]. Or, as he also explained with greater precision in 1985: 'Yo tengo una serie de obras, muchas escritas en Cuba, que ahora se publican, con lo cual parece que yo estoy escribiendo mucho, lo cual no es cierto, desgraciadamente. Estoy sencillamente mecanografiando muchos textos que había escrito en Cuba. Date cuenta que son veinte años sin publicar prácticamente nada allí.' [L Hasson, 1992a: 61]. This phrase, one that could be considered central to what we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, is one I will return to later, at the moment it suffices to mention it.

These disquisitions on the auto/biographical story which we also call Reinaldo Arenas are not relevant per se, but are significant to the extent in which they show how, while fabricating a fixed general image of the author Arenas, the critic F. Soto prepares a consistent analysis (consistent with the image offered) of the books attributed to the aforesaid author. In other words, to confuse auto/biographical story, author and the person's biological dimension is consistent in the sense that it corresponds to an idea of literature which analysis the history of governments and their institutions in

order *to apprehend* that scriptorial activity which by convention we call literature.

Soto continues: 'At the time of his death, Arenas had written eleven novels, nine that had been published and two that had not.' [1994a, 3]. The number of novels which can be attributed to this character (of biobibliographical narrative) which we call Reinaldo Arenas is still a subject under discussion: not all the manuscripts have been found and, in addition, at least two unpublished novels of the Holguín period are known of, whose originals are currently the property of Arenas's mother [L. Hasson, 1992 and D. Prats, 1996].⁷⁹ As for the rest, as F. Soto rightly affirms, *El color del verano* and *El asalto* are practically posthumous publications, although the author had revised both manuscripts some time before his suicide. In this categorical affirmation by the literary critic F. Soto is undoubtedly to be found that desire, common within academic communities, to deliver in a work the last word on the subject in question, *to impose a sense of finality* from which future analyses should begin. Nothing could be further from the truth in this case.

Not unrelated to this authorial image of Reinaldo Arenas which is being fabricated, there exists a whole series of attributions to Arenas himself (in terms of auto/biographical story or in terms of biological person, as the case may be) which have neither been proved nor act as present references or lines of argument by which we might convince ourselves that the frequent

⁷⁹ According to Arenas's mother [D. Prats, 1996], there were three novels but it seems that Arenas himself took one to Havana which ended up getting lost. It also seems that the writing for a film script about *Paradiso* which Arenas wrote at the end of the sixties was mislaid [Ette, 1992] -apparently a short version of this script can be founded in the Arenas's Collection: Box 15, folder 4. A similar fate seems to have befallen a series of poems and attempts at cartoon strips [Valero, 1991]. On the other hand, it remains to be seen whether any of the unpublished material deposited in Princeton University can be published -as was the case, for example, with the manuscript published in Spanish in 1995 under the title *Adiós a mamá*.

contradictions in Arenas himself and in his literary analysts have finally been resolved. To look at some examples:

1. '...described [the <pentagonía>] by Arenas as both a writer's autobiography and a metaphor of Cuban history...' [1994a, 3].
2. '...Arenas considered this third and central novel (reference to *Otra vez el mar*) of the five-book sequence to be his most important work.' [1994a, 4].
3. '...what I see as Arenas's insistence that the writer's voice be a cry for freedom challenging both the literary and social establishments...' [1994a, 8].

Where is this said? Under what conditions or circumstances? To what purpose? Why? These are some of the questions to assail me upon encountering such assumptions of literary criticism attributed to the author Reinaldo Arenas. I believe that F. Soto's book does not respond to the epistemological dimension of these questions; yet he fails to do so in relation to an author who, unlike his predecessors, launched himself into *creating his books starting from the fabrication of a paratext*. His hypotheses generate an auto/biographical story and conceive within it an author (an image, a radical type of the Lezarian *imago*) with a name. Yet to do so in relation to *The Pentagonía*, can be seen, to some extent as the epitome of all that I have up to now been opposing in order to uphold the possibility of interesting readings of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. The central points may be summed up as follows:

1. F. Soto plots his thesis upon precisely what I would consider to be the erroneous conception of a 'fictionalization of reality' and of its complement, the so-called 'literature of witness'. '*Reinaldo Arenas: The Pentagonía* studies Arenas's five-book sequence through the general framework of the Cuban documentary novel tradition, a specific vein within the state-

sanctioned literature of the Revolution thus providing a meaningful context in which to place the texts that originated in Cuba.' [1994a, 6].

2. On the scant usefulness of linking a series of complex narratives which relate to each other to produce what we know as the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas to mass media accounts and journalistic reports (called 'the Revolution's official cultural policy makers' in this case), F. Soto affirms:

This analytical framework allows me to illustrate the differences between the writer's particular view of literature (fiction) and that of the Revolution's official cultural policy makers. Moreover, placing the novels of the pentalogy within this literary tradition better reveals the narrative strategies and the distinct structural and rhetorical techniques present in Arenas's novels, thus allowing for a more comprehensive and critical reading of each text. [1994a, 6].

3. It is upon this adventitious idea of supposed *dialogue* between scriptorial activity and 'political discourse' that F. Soto consolidates his point of view: 'I demonstrate how the culture-specific ideological circumstances of the revolution turned the Cuban documentary novel into a state-sanctioned tradition whose basic tenets Arenas singularly subverted and called into question through his literary voice.' [1994a, 7].

4. Finally, we find in *The Pentagonía* an entire series of vague and imprecise terms, which is scarcely promising when encountered in the introduction. For instance: 'Literary concerns and creative processes of the writer' [p. 3], 'the family saga' [p. 4, referring to the 'pentagonia'], 'tradition (...) as a normative transmission of literary forms and styles from past to present' [p. 7], 'system of power' [p. 8], 'the characteristic subversive feature of Arenas's work' [p. 7], 'normative element in traditionalist ideology' [p. 8].

With such a proposal (referring to supposed traditions without specifying their quality, condition or epistemic status) as to the relevance of the study of state institutions in relation to scriptorial activity and to a never-explained 'true creativity', one ought not to be taken by surprise by its obviousness, already to be expected even before it has been read. 'In short, studying Arenas's texts within the specific context of the Cuban documentary novel tradition allows me to illustrate better the writer's narrative strategies as well as his subversive attacks against the politicizing of the artistic media in revolutionary Cuba.' [1994a, 9]. If, in order to speak of that which we know as the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, we were to need what Soto calls <Cuba>, then it is hard to understand why Reinaldo Arenas's books are different from those of any of the Cuban writers that Arenas suggests tend towards journalism rather than literature (Lisandro Otero and Miguel Barnet, amongst others, are two examples who appear in *Antes que anochezca*) or vary from others who have become known during the exile of Arenas himself - see, for example the Antonio Benítez Rojo of *La isla que se repite* [1985] or the Jesús Díaz of *Las palabras perdidas* [1992].

If today one can still speak of interest and originality in a scriptorial work, it is my view that in Reinaldo Arenas such a thing does not reside in those aspects proposed for analysis by the literary critic F. Soto - who also resembles in this all previous and foreseeable analyses thus far discussed.

This is to say that, although employing different lines of argument, the idea of what is 'literary' coincides both in the Cuba of Roberto Fernández Retamar and Miguel Barnet and in that of literary critics such as Soto and many of the 'Hispanic' departments of North American universities dealing with Reinaldo Arenas. Whether for reasons that serve to justify state institutions or for reasons of commercial legitimization of academic work,

the great majority of works dedicated to the so-called *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas are inscribed - by their notions and procedures - in that nineteenth century bibliographical set which we call romanticism and which considers any notion of literature as a building block of the so-called 'national literatures'. To my way of thinking, Arenas writes from the starting point of a contemporaneity where every idea of country or nation has disappeared or, in other words, has been converted into a *territory* which has nothing to do with such State beliefs.

Consequently, given this confusion, from this equation of analyses which appear to be so diverse, it is not surprising that the final argument of Soto's book should dwell on such unreal notions as 'true creativity' or 'authentic artistic representation' [1994a, 8] whose meaning I still find myself questioning.

Chapter 5

1. A *testimonio* of Agony

Reinaldo Arenas: The Pentagonía, as has already been mentioned, is the book about Arenas which has had the greatest market success. It is therefore useful to consider its function as it also constitutes a kind of catalogue containing the majority of opinions and interpretations entertained by literary critics concerning what we continuously refer to as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

The description of Seymour Menton's investigation [1982] into Cuban literature and the plot analyses of some books by Miguel Barnet are the two principal elements on the basis of which the critic Francisco Soto talks of a *documentary novel* whose epistemological status (the only reason of interest, I believe, for referring to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* in such terms) is never defined. This vagueness and lack of precision runs throughout the entire book in expressions such as 'documentary texts' [13], 'the political and cultural juncture of Cuban reality (1951-81)' [15], 'faithfull historical recreation of a collective consciousness' [133], 'historical facts' [135 y 111], 'subversive documentation' [103: it is interesting to say that the same concept was and is used by dictatorships other than the Cuban regime to name the indisputable 'reality of the real'], 'revolutionary historiography' [86], 'this moment of literary experimentation' [18], 'scientific material' [18], 'social consciousness' [23], 'documentary realism' [23], 'documentary

literature' [24], 'documentary genre' [30], 'documentary representation' [32], 'official revolutionary historiography' [34], 'contemporary postmodern literatures' [48], 'deconstruction of gender' [169], 'amount of social consciousness' [58], 'genuine historical events' [84], 'the patient's subconscious network of symbols' [86], 'official (linear) history' [89], 'neutral transcriptions of reality' [90], 'literary life' [90], 'objective empirical reality' [93], 'representation of time-space' [96] and 'the astute reader' [97] - among many others.

On the other hand, as far as I understand, there is no reason to assign a narrative style that pursues its legitimacy by elaborating a series of events in biographical terms exclusively to something called 'Cuba', through drawing up a series of events in biographical terms. Is this not the same thing that happens, for example, with the confessional autobiographical style which proliferates in best sellers' lists? [see Paul John Eakin, 1980].

2. Further similitudes and attempts at *testimonio*

With at least twenty five books on the market and almost a hundred published interviews - all writings attributed to the name of Reinaldo Arenas- the thesis of the literary critic F. Soto seems more than suspicious when, in 'The Pentagonía within the Context of the Cuban Documentary Novel' [1994a, 11] or 'The Pentagonía: Giving Voice to the Voiceless' [1994a, 36], he bases his categorization of Arenas solely on an editorial note which, additionally, he erroneously attributes to Reinaldo Arenas.

The note to the Argos Vergara edition of *Cantando en el pozo* [1982a] refers to the author in the third person and bears no signature (at no moment does it say 'I, Reinaldo Arenas'). If in any case Arenas was the author he would

have had his motives for not wishing to appear there - the reason or motive is actually less important (it could even be a matter of a publisher's *malentendu*) than the function it eventually fulfils.⁸⁰

Why not think, for example, that the note, located in a paratextual space, is in fact there to place the book (historiographically) - whether it be in the bibliographical narration or in the publishing market - and not, as the critic F.Soto [1994a] maintains, to relate it to a 'context' or a 'Cuban novelistic tradition'? Why not also consider that Arenas was searching for a voice other than that of the author Reinaldo Arenas in order to situate the actual relation author-book-publishing market?

It is therefore scarcely surprising that from the perspective of this literary critic, the basic conclusion, on which F. Soto also practically bases the development of his entire analysis, should be to discount the association between scriptorial activity (in the plot, in the characters to start with and finally in Arenas - whether the author, the auto/biographical story or what is not known) and a supposed 'urgent need to give testimony about his particular world' [1994a, 40]. 'Character-witnesses' is the name with which F. Soto denotes this confusion between characters, author and auto/biographical story, never clarified in the book.

At no moment do we find from the pen of the literary critic F. Soto the conjecture that, very possibly, in what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, scriptorial activity is to be found linked to a certain notion of subjectivization (subjective formation) or, likewise, of 'event', be this in the plots themselves or in the production of an auto/biographical story and in the

⁸⁰ Taking into account Arenas's critical opinion with regard to this edition [L. Hasson, 1992a] and the number of errata, it would not be out of the question to conjecture a misunderstanding or confusion regarding the note which speaks of the author in the third person and does not carry Arenas's signature.

formation of an 'authorial image'. F. Soto states that, 'Arenas's characters-witnesses -dissidents, "extravagants", dreamers, free-thinkers, homosexuals- are also people without a history. They represent those individuals not welcomed into a new revolutionary regime, for they fail to contribute, in the government's eyes, to the political and sociohistorical legitimacy of a revolutionary consciousness. It is precisely these marginal voices, these social outcasts, these victims of totalitarian utopianism, these so-called people without a history whom Arenas allows to speak and welcomes into his novels.' [1994a, 41]. If this thesis of F. Soto's were to be found acceptable, the only difference between Miguel Barnet and Reinaldo Arenas with regard to a notion of literary writing would be the kind of character invented by each (and there is no fiction more extreme than that of a 'witness-character').

As can be seen, the distance that exists with regard to the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, between the literary critics of certain North American universities and those journalists of Casa de las Américas who claim to be engaged with literature, is a short one, and sometimes a non-existent one.

3. The Anonymous Avenger

The anonymous note of *Cantando en el pozo* is understood by F. Soto as 'sociohistorical context' [1994a, 42], as 'historical realities' [41], as a chronology of 'character-witnesses' [41], as a project 'about Cuban society' [39]. Undoubtedly this all links up more to the notion of literature entertained by the literary critic F. Soto than to the 'visual literature' of which Arenas spoke.

There is in this historiographical reading named 'pentagonía' by Reinaldo Arenas, a sense of writing working upon the frontier between that which can be written and that which cannot, in addition to an inevitable consideration of the purely scriptorial character of any idea of event or happening. On the other hand, what we call the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas is a complex fusion of narratives where the auto/biographical - defining the character Reinaldo Arenas on one hand and the author Reinaldo Arenas on the other - plays a fundamental role, and in that sense any intention or scheme of temporalization [please note Arenas never mentioned something called "Cuban society" (*sociedad cubana*) o, "sociohistorical context" (*contexto sociohistórico*)] should be given the same relevance as the auto/biographical story.

It is in that sense, then, that I understand Arenas's expressions when he says that it is the interpreters of the historical narratives that interest him, more than the historians who write them [see the interview with M. Morley and E. Santí (1983)]. These expressions must also be taken as delimiting the <pentagonía>'s plots in which those narrations known as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* are located and situate the issues in their historiographical dimension.

4. The Allegory of Method

F. Soto does what the other literary critics engaged with the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas do: where Arenas speaks of 'a world', the literary critic translates this as 'Cuban history'. '*El color del verano*,' says Arenas 'es un mundo que si no lo escribo se perderá fragmentado en la memoria de los que lo conocieron.' [1991a, 249]. This statement not only serves to corroborate F. Soto's allegorism but also clearly indicates the scriptorial nature attributed to the memory by Arenas.

This example, as arbitrary as any other, is an allegory of the literary approach which converts Reinaldo Arenas into a kind of historical anchorman taking charge, according to F. Soto's analysis, of the cause of all marginalised Cubans. Here he starts to draw a profile of that character who - also bearing the name of Reinaldo Arenas - F. Soto will create and carry forward for the next two hundred pages.

5. The 'I' Fiction

'The flesh-and-blood writer' [43], 'the fictitious writer' [43], 'Arenas's fictitious alter ego' [43], 'extra-literary writer' [44]: these are some of the recurring euphemisms throughout the whole initial analysis of *The Pentagonía* that serve somehow to deepen the already-mentioned, confusion and uncertainty. It is inevitable that from these 'lacuna-terms', to give them a name, there should emerge a basic question: is not the very idea of a writer a fiction composed of an auto/biographical story and of some bibliographical narratives?

6. 'Arenas's texts'

F. Soto states conclusively that 'While the documentary novel is presented as a tightly woven network of determinate significations, a set of so-called real affirmations in which reference is guaranteed by the correspondence of language to some objective reality existing before being called forth in language, the novels of the *pentagonía* make no attempt to establish such a correspondence.' [1994a, 44]. Not only had the precision of a supposed 'documentary novel' remained in suspense; now, in addition, there is added that hypothetical concern recognizably not possessed by what is known as

the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas. That is to say, any link with problems of 'objective reality' or 'reference' belong to the critic F. Soto's nineteenth-century idea of literature, not to Reinaldo Arenas. The books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas bypass any such concern, which would lead one to believe that it is not a good idea to compare them to a type of journalistic writing whose major concern is that narrated by F. Soto in order to analyse them or, at very least to attempt an approach to them, even though he himself appears to question the basis of such an approach.

Soto continues, 'Arenas's texts do not presume to be anything but what they are, pure fiction. And as fiction, they delight in the deployment of a poetic and metaphorical language that alludes, suggests, and evokes, touching the reader and drawing him or her into a dazzling and provocative literary space of multiple possibilities.' [1994a, 44]. Although I am not sure whether I have understood this passage in all its vagueness, nevertheless to say that Arenas's books are 'pure fiction' is tantamount to not saying anything or, even worse, it is to be unaware of the number and variety of manners and modes in which this group of narrations known as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is composed and complemented.

7. *Exemplum* of the personification of literary critics

'Lo scrittore americano (...) è uno che lavora in una università, che scrive dei romanzi sulla vita del campus, sui pettegolezzi degli adulteri tra professori, che non è un gran mondo, non è una cosa veramente eccitante, ma è così: la vita della società americana è quella.' *Eremita a Parigi* [I. Calvino, 1994, 243].

Statements of the type 'In 1984 Arenas dedicated an entire novel to this period in Cuban revolutionary history, *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*.'

[1994a, 46], recur throughout the work of F. Soto and continue to position Arenas in the midst of a whole series of misunderstandings about the notion of history, of auto/biography, of the activity of writing, etc. In other words, what *The Pentagonía* does, as occurs with all literary analysis, is to invent a character called Reinaldo Arenas and, throughout the course of 193 pages, tries to demonstrate (with little success, one might add) that this character is the same historiographical character also named Reinaldo Arenas. In order to avoid confusing confusions, from now onwards we shall call F. Soto's character *Arenitas*. The auto/biographical story(ies) we call Reinaldo Arenas is one matter, the bibliographical narration(s) we attribute to him another, the idea of the author linked to these yet another, as is, finally, the character(s) created by the critic (in this case F.Soto) in his analyses (which generally attempt to identify themselves with the author in question). We will return to this matter later.

F. Soto says 'Arenas dedicated', that is, Arenas *did* this, that and the other: it is the eternal 'for Arenas...etc, etc, etc.' In another, similar situation Soto says (referring to *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*) '...that Arenas's text, presented as pure fiction, was born out of a desire to remember his friend Nelson Rodríguez Leyva...' [1994a, 46]. And following on with the conclusive suppositions, F. Soto speaks of 'pure fiction' and says that he undertook his book *from the starting point* of the experiences and reminiscences of a friend of his. Suffice it to say that the historiographic character we call Reinaldo Arenas has nothing to do with this character of F. Soto's since he never refers to his 'fiebre de la escribidera' [1967], neither does he explain the material origins (if such can exist) of his book *Arturo, la estrella más brillante* published in 1984 and dedicated to Nelson Rodríguez Leyva who, we discover from a note at the end of the text, was known by the writer.

Trying to round off his character, Soto says,

Finally, the observation that all of the novels of the pentalogy represent "a turbulent and terrible era (which in these novels spans one hundred years) like a life raft of hope" can be read as a parodic allusion to Gabriel García Márquez's novel *Cien años de soledad*... (...) Here Arenas suggests that the *pentagonía* likewise provides for the reader a history of twentieth-century Cuban society, and by extension a microcosm of Latin American totalitarianism, be it from the political right or left. [1994a, 47].

To say that this statement seems far-fetched would be to fail to understand that, for *Arenitas*, it is more important to justify academic literary studies and their history than to engage exclusively in a scriptorial activity - which would seem, to be what engaging in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas means. And there was nothing for it but that the literary effort of *Arenitas* should consist in 'a set of narrative responses of orthodox Cuban socialist realism' [48]. This last reference is a journalistic expression whose informative nature does not render its obscurity any clearer.

8. The Muddiness of the Matter

A page and a half of commentary about Linda Hutcheon and one scant quotation from Gérard Genette were not sufficient for F. Soto [1994a, 51 ff] to comment on the *inequality* (lack of balance) between the precise specification of a term such as *narrador homodieético* ('homodiegetic narrator') and that piebald composition constituting his character *Arenitas*. Also, still referring to *Arenitas* and characterizing him, F. Soto says that 'the boundaries between writer, narrator, and character are blurred. This blurring will continue in Arenas's subsequent novels, in which characters

create other characters, doubles that complement them or show other aspects of their personality. This mirroring or doubling of the creative process within the texts makes Arenas's characters extremely rich and complex.' [1994a, 53].

'Juntos pero no revueltos' was a phrase that some newspapers in South American countries used to employ in order to make elliptical references to the Cuban revolution of 1958-1959. Pursuing this saying, let us say that in the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas (as we are seeing, far from any link with the character of F. Soto's called *Arenitas*) it is perfectly possible to distinguish author, narrator, characters and *lector in fabula*. Unquestionably this is no easy task as it is precisely the *dithyrambic play* between them that is one of the features that contributes to the originality of what we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, to the extent that this 'play' exists in a multiplicity, in the shape of an *intreccio*, which involves all these different planes and spaces (including - and especially - the paratextual).

This work is not particularly concerned with analysing the plots of Reinaldo Arenas's books, far less with approaching their languages in relation to a theory of writing. Despite this, one cannot fail to note that to undertake such a task is not something that can be settled with two insignificant bibliographical mentions and a couple of pieces of journalistic information. The 'muddiness of the matter', as Macedonio Fernández said, does not justify the simplification of the argument.

9. Further Testimonies of *Arenitas*

One of those confused notions to which the critic F. Soto constantly refers is that of 'Cuban history' [1994a: 57, 43, *passim*] since only thus can he justify

the comparison, sustained throughout the book, between the 'pentagonía' and a supposed literary genre called 'the documentary novel'.

With the conclusive speed which characterizes *The Pentagonía*, F. Soto refers to some of the characters of Reinaldo Arenas's novels as being 'authentic interpreters' of other characters - while failing ever to define what the significance of this notion is. This is precisely what he does later with the author Arenas in relation to the phantom 'Cuban history', and with equal flippancy.

In *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* Arenas writes,

Muchas veces, siempre, seguramente, sí, había sido todos ellos, y había padecido por ellos y quizá -porque él tenía más imaginación, porque él iba más allá- al ser ellos había sufrido más que ellos mismos dentro de su propio terror, invariable, y les había otorgado una voz, un modo de expresar el estupor, una dimensión del espanto que quizá, seguramente, ellos mismos jamás llegarían a conocer ni padecer. [1980a, 193].

From this passage F. Soto concludes that:

Fortunato's desire to become the authentic interpreter of his family's pain erases the boundaries between self and other, leaving the adolescent overwhelmed by the frustration and destitutive existence of his family. Like the writer-informer of the documentary novel, Fortunato wishes to give voice to his family's agonies, but this close identification with the *other* produces a loss of *self* that results in confusion and ambiguity... [1994a, 61].

Arenas says 'sí, había sido todo ellos', and also 'y les había otorgado una voz'. It is not relevant here to undertake an analysis of the incapacity in the

characters of Reinaldo Arenas's novels to delimit their own subjectivity, but it can be said that to reach that conclusion we need not necessarily believe that Reinaldo Arenas carries out an *opposing dialogue* with what the critic F. Soto obscurely calls a 'documentary novel'. The absence of subjectivity, even the problematic space of a process of subjectivization, is one of the constants in the novels attributed to the author Reinaldo Arenas who, as I am trying to show, *is achieved* - told, described, seen, attained - by means of a scriptorial working-out. To perceive this it is not necessarily obligatory to go through either inscrutable 'Cuban history' or the journalism of the 'documentary novel' with which F. Soto's character (*Arenitas*) seems to communicate.⁸¹ On the contrary, a consideration of the 'documentary novel' as a perspective for the analysis of the novels attributed to Reinaldo Arenas inverts the problem. According to the critic, it is the identification with the others which (individually) destroys characters like Fortunato. I, on the other hand, believe it to be the exact opposite. Characters such as Fortunato never achieve an image of themselves and it is for this reason that they are irredeemably alone, that they cannot manage to communicate with others and that means, more importantly still, they have to imagine not only other characters but also their own feelings. Subjectivity is always absent, always desired and pursued; it is thus, somehow or other, that characters such as Fortunato can lose something they never had. The systematic suicide of the majority of these characters does not only confirm this last idea, but at the same time indicates to what extent the fabrication of images (*imaquinación*, images in action) was not sufficient for the construction of a personal itinerary where thoughts and perceptions, whose separation and distance appear to grow with the passage of time, can cohabit.

⁸¹ We will overlook here the more than arguable 'to give voice to his family's agonies' since as we shall see, one of the constants in the characters of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is a non-conformist and radical individualism, in the 'documentary novel' terms in which the critic F. Soto places it.

As if this were not enough, Reinaldo Arenas says (as F. Soto himself mentions), referring to *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas*: '[La novela] está estructurada por monólogos completamente aislados; aun cuando en un momento determinado parece que están hablando, a cada uno lo que le interesa es contar su propia tragedia. Están tan enajenados por su propio dolor que toda posibilidad de diálogo queda excluida' [see the interview with Perla Rozencvaig (revista *Hispanamérica*, 1981)]. We will return to this but from the opposite extreme: one of the *contemporary* problems of all subjectivization is certainly the incapacity for affective communication, the unnameable (the unwritable) nature of individual pain and tragedy. In this sense the direction which the literary critic F. Soto insists upon taking with the idea of 'real witness' is even less comprehensible - as if, in a contemporary world devoid of fixed languages or set identities or societies or 'true stories', the presence of a 'witness' or 'testimony' should matter to anyone or, more to the point, as if this were relevant to the desperate and suicidal characters of the novels attributed to Reinaldo Arenas.

10. The Real Authentic Witness of the Literary Critic's Romanticism

Towards the end of the third section of his book, Soto says that 'The notion that witnesses must be "real" in order for their testimony to be valid is flat and simplistic when one considers Reinaldo Arenas's narrative worlds' [1994a, 75]. This gives the impression that the analysis is taking a different tack, changing pace.

F. Soto continues, 'Arenas's characters are witnesses who testify of their marginal existence within Cuban (prerevolutionary and revolutionary) society. Their fictitious nature does not minimize in any way the strength of

their testimony. The life-art connection is neither severed nor destroyed, but rather is imaginatively reforged and reaches the reader on a cognitive, aesthetic, and human level.' [1994a, 75]. Nevertheless we find ourselves once again in the full midst of nineteenth-century romanticism, in fact the situation is even worse because we are surrounded by a mass of concepts lacking any explanation or meaning and a name, Reinaldo Arenas, whose epistemic status remains out of our grasp.

As a result the analysis in the end rests not on any precise, clear conceptualization but on vague words such as 'authenticity' [75], 'the aesthetic distance of fiction' [75], 'Cuban society' [passim], etc. In this sense *The Pentagónia* can be read as a book dedicated to the literary theory of the journalist Miguel Barnet (alias) *Miguel Barniz* [Arenas, 1992]. In other words, if it is a case of defining that which F. Soto never names - that is to say, the epistemic quality of the idea of the 'documentary novel', it could then be said that from *The Pentagónia* there emerges an unexpected study of journalistic writing which tries to inscribe itself historiographically as literature.

11. The Documentary Evidence

F. Soto states that,

In response to his critics, Barnet has always maintained that his documentary novels are 'life histories' that are recreated through the writer's imaginative contributions. For the most part, after *Biografía de un cimarrón* Barnet's documentary novels have been read and accepted as representing 'real' periods in Cuba history... (...) Given this fact, why haven't Reinaldo Arenas's novels, regardless of their fanciful flights of the imagination, been equally accepted by the revolutionary regime as

representing Cuban society? Aside from differences of political ideology, I believe the answer lies in the fact that Miguel Barnet's novels present the personal lives of individual characters only to highlight the public and historical life of the period. Arenas's characters, on the other hand, meditate on their own existential problems and the issues shaping individual existence, a practice that runs counter to the accepted revolutionary consciousness, which places class struggle over individual experience. Thus, in Cuba the question is not whether a given character in a documentary novel is 'real' or not, but whether a given character adheres to and supports the accepted revolutionary consciousness. [1994a, 76].

This extensive quotation from the critic F. Soto is of interest because it permits an understanding of the extent to which he is not attempting to produce a critique of the idea of the 'documentary novel' but rather, on the contrary, trying simply to ascertain, whether this category can be applied (by contrast) to the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

At no point does F. Soto suggest *that it is not possible to read what we know as Reinaldo Arenas' work through Miguel Barnet's journalistic works*, as this thesis sustains, but rather, on the contrary, that the very idea of a literature of *testimonio* (when clearly understood, obviously, suggests F. Soto) permits a grasp of the novels attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, presupposing such entelechies as 'revolutionary consciousness' [76], 'vitality' [78], 'ideology' [77, *passim*] or 'novels which represent Cuban society' [76], *inter alia*.

The platitudinous conclusion is inevitable. 'In *Celestino antes del alba*, *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas*, *Otra vez el mar*, *El color del verano*, and *El asalto* Arenas's character-witnesses are the complex synthesis of his

personal experiences, creative imagination, and artistic inspiration.' [1994a, 76]. Could not the same be said of any book sold as 'literature'?

12. Arenitas's Ghosts

F. Soto declares,

By not assigning privileged or hierarchical modes of being Arenas's novels propose a nonrestrictive code of reality; 'real' experience, as manifested in the way most people attempt to secure an univocal meaning of experience and of themselves, is *not* opposed to other forms of personal experiences, such as dreams, hallucinations, and fantasy. What most people call reality is never presented as one-dimensional or strictly univalenced in Arenas's novels but rather as multifaceted and even magical. In an interview that Arenas gave shortly after falling into disfavor with the revolutionary regime, later published in the limited edition of *La Vieja Rosa*, he reaffirmed his nonexclusive position concerning reality: 'Para mí el realismo no es solamente decir: se levantó, cogió la guagua... Para mí eso es real, pero cuando el hombre se acuesta y empieza a soñar, también eso, de alguna forma es real. ¿Es real o no es real? Todo cuanto imagino es real.' (p. 108) [1994a, 78].

Taking this passage on its own, I generally agree with the literary critic's proposal. The problem, however, dwells in the fact that F. Soto does not contemplate these conjectures *outside the books themselves* and, far less, in connection with the name Reinaldo Arenas *who is nothing but yet another character*. It is as if the whole of the previous statement were only valid at the level of plot, but not in the consideration of the authorial figure, of auto/biographical story or of the enunciative situation of the analysis itself. This inability to consider *the outside of the novels* attributed to Reinaldo Arenas - other than in the unforeseen and hackneyed code 'biographical-

testimonial' - is what assures this book of a position as an exercise in academic validation rather than an original reflection on the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

13. The Island Correspondents

Using once again the classic formula 'What Arenas means to say...', F. Soto claims that, 'In short, the novels of the pentalogy question the revolutionary literary establishment's restrictive concept as to the accepted (expected) 'reality' that must be represented in literary texts.' [1994a, 79]. If it is a matter of questioning the government of the island of Cuba, including its idea of public space, it would not be necessary to turn to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* since any book published in Cuba by any author not a journalist of the Cuban government (Miguel Barnet is only one such) would constitute a questioning of the 'restrictive concept' of the revolutionary *establishment*.⁸² One could proceed along this track without finding anything of interest in what we know as the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

14. Real Arenas of Objectivity

F. Soto declares that,

The *diégèse* of *Celestino antes del alba* is filtered through the child-narrator's imagination, as we have previously noted. Hence, reality is portrayed as a state of mind, a psychic interweaving or intercrossing that appears more conceptualized than concrete. This conceptualization totally disregards the notion of any stable and unambiguous state that coincides with itself outside of the perceiving subject. In *Celestino antes del*

⁸² Any idea of fiction would go 'against' this form of governmental journalism which F. Soto calls the 'documentary novel' [see Soto, 1994a: 88].

alba there is a (con)fusion of what I shall term *wakefulness* and *dream state* in which there is no valorization of one over the other; that is, one state is not presented as more real than another. Both appear as plural and unfixed. [1994a, 80].

This is an interesting statement but one that the literary critic keeps within the limits of the idea of a book itself, within the margins of what we call a text. In other words, the previous proposal, *the outside of the text*, turns into exactly the opposite of what it states (or claims to state): 'It is evident that for Arenas characters in a literary work, just like human beings in life, are not logical and coherent beings anchored in an objective empirical reality, but complex and contradictory souls ceaselessly transforming themselves.' [1994a, 84]. The declared '(con)fusion of what I shall term wakefulness and dream state' [80] rapidly becomes 'an objective empirical reality' [84].

15. *Lector in fabula*

F. Soto states that, 'Unlike the documentary novel, the experimental structures of the novels of the *pentagonía* demand the participation of the reader in the creative process. The reader must be extremely flexible in his or her approach of these novels, confronting, as do the characters, the chaos and non-sense of existence.' [1994a, 91]. Even if one were to overlook the conceptual vagueness of the 'documentary novel', such statements still fail to interest. Is the originality and achievement of the 'pentagonía' the repetition of what *Rayuela*, to use as an example the novel of the French writer of Argentine origin Julio Cortázar, had already proposed in 1963?

Hence banal observations end up as descriptive conclusions: '*El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* requires an active reader who can make the text

intelligible in spite of these chronological violations and transgressions.' [1994a, 92-3]. What contemporary writing dealing with the problem of fiction - at the same time as attempting to exercise it - is not covered by this statement?

The literary critic also speaks of 'the readers' without ever defining the scope. The only 'reader' who can be defined in a text, as Umberto Eco [1979] has clearly demonstrated, is within the text itself - what is commonly called *lector in fabula*. Even Wolfgang Iser himself, quoted *à la page* by F. Soto, locates the analysis in similar epistemic terms:

Nella vasta letteratura teorica sulla narrativa, sulla estetica della ricezione o sul *reader-oriented criticism*, appaiono vari personaggi chiamati Lettore Ideale, Lettore Implicito, Lettore Virtuale, Metalettore e così via -ciascuno di essi evocando come propria controparte un Autore Ideale o Implicito o Virtuale. Questi termini non sono sempre sinonimi. (...) Il mio lettore modello, per esempio, è molto simile al lettore Implicito di Wolfgang Iser. [Eco, 1994: 19].

Although Eco later clarifies the distinction:

Tuttavia per Iser il lettore (...) <fa sì che il testo riveli le sue molteplici connessioni potenziali. Queste connessioni sono prodotte dalla mente che elabora la materia prima del testo, ma non sono il testo stesso perché esso consiste solo di frasi, affermazioni, informazioni, eccetera... Questa interazione non ha luogo nel testo stesso, ma si sviluppa attraverso il processo di lettura... Questo processo formula qualcosa che non era formulato nel testo, e tuttavia di quel testo rappresenta l'intenzione.> (...) Tale processo appare più simile a quello di cui parlavo nel 1962 in *Opera aperta*. Il lettore modello di cui ho parlato in *Lector in fabula* è invece un insieme di istruzioni testuali, che si manifestano sulla superficie del testo, proprio

sotto forma di affermazioni o altri segnali. Come ha rivelato Paola Pugliatti, (...) <la prospettiva fenomenologica di Iser assegna al lettore un privilegio che è stato considerato prerogativa dei testi, vale a dire quello di stabilire un 'punto di vista', in tal modo determinando il significato del testo. Il lettore Modello di Eco (1979) non figura solo come qualcuno che coopera e interagisce col testo: in misura maggiore -e in un certo senso minore- nasce col testo, rappresenta il nerbo della sua strategia interpretativa. Pertanto la competenza dei Lettori Modello è determinata dal tipo di *imprint* genetico che il testo ha loro trasmesso... Creati col testo, imprigionati in esso, essi godono tanta libertà quanta il testo loro concede.> (...) È vero che Iser in *The Act of Reading* dice che 'il concetto di lettore implicito è quindi una struttura testuale che anticipa la presenza del ricevente', ma subito aggiunge: 'senza necessariamente definirlo'. Per Iser 'il ruolo del lettore non è identico al lettore fittizio ritratto nel testo. Quest'ultimo è soltanto una componente del ruolo del lettore'. (...) pur riconoscendo l'esistenza di quelle altre componenti che Iser ha così brillantemente studiato, punterò principalmente la mia attenzione proprio su quel 'lettore fittizio ritratto nel testo', assumendo che il compito principale dell'interpretazione sia quello di incarnarlo, malgrado la sua esistenza sia fantomatica. Se volete, sono più 'tedesco' di Iser, più astratto, o come direbbero i filosofi non-continentali- più speculativo. (...) In tal senso parlerò di lettore modello non solo per testi aperti a molteplici punti di vista, ma anche per quelli che prevedono un lettore testardo e obbediente; in altre parole, non esiste solo un lettore modello per il *Finnegans Wake* ma anche per l'orario ferroviario, e il testo si aspetta da ciascuno di costoro un diverso tipo di cooperazione. [U. Eco, 1994: 19-21].

The use of this long quotation has a double purpose: to confirm Soto's superficial analysis and, on the other hand, to introduce a question I will deal with later. That is, which type of *lector in fabula* - or, more precisely, of 'Lettore Modello' - emerges when a text (or, as it would be more correct to

say in connection with the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, a book) is basically conceived from its *paratextualité*.

16. *The 'Real' Thing*

Commenting on *Otra vez el mar*, F. Soto says, 'The statement in parenthesis contradicts the writer's presumption that he exists, controlling the work, conveying precisely what he wishes, regardless of everything. The awareness that the writer, as Blanchot has stated, only exists as a result of the work, that he or she has no identity apart from the work, undermines the authority of traditional authorship.' [1994a, 125]. This is surprising since the entire analysis of *The Pentagónia* takes the opposite direction to the conception of Maurice Blanchot [cf. 1955 and 1980]; and this is not only to the extent that Soto never defines an idea of author, but also to the extent to which neither does the activity of writing appear to be situated - be this by itself, as in relation to the play between text (characters) and paratext (author and auto/biographical account) which runs through that set of narrations we call the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

This paradox reaches its apogee when we encounter a chapter entitled 'Mistrust of Literary Forms' [116 and ff.] without the mediation of any explanation of the range of writing in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas. To refer then to a supposed 'ideological power of the word' [127] is the resort where this absent scriptorial analysis has taken refuge. A quotation from Blanchot and two borrowed terms make up the rest for a conclusion that 'critical studies have made it common knowledge that the literary form is always ideological, even when written by those who claim their writing has no message.' [1994a, 127]. After 127 pages supposedly dedicated to Reinaldo Arenas he concludes with a 'fundamental ideological intention'

[127]. Evidently the confusion at the outset has not only improved but has been turned into a cliché, including a mention of Borges. To refer to a supposed 'ideological power of the word' [127] is to presuppose that veracity and literature, that literature and 'society', are fused and confused (without knowing exactly what each of these terms means) to give rise to that *malentendu* which literary critics call 'Latin America', what one of the recent outlandish publications from a North American university press devoted to so-called 'testimonial discourse' identified with undesired precision as *The "Real" Thing* [G. Gugelberger, 1997].

17. Arenas University Press

Referring to the works of Miguel Barnet, the critic F. Soto says, 'These novels, like other Cuban documentary novels, revise (rewrite) Cuban History, always from the vantage point of the revolutionary government.' [1994a, 130]. This statement possesses a series of imprecisions which are not easy to grasp. What is the precise meaning of 'revise (rewrite) Cuban history'? A history is so entirely narration, therefore the idea of rewriting it lacks meaning: the historical change if such a thing can be spoken of, functions through accumulation, mixture and opposition of narratives. In this sense, that the military dictatorship which governs Cuba should have salaried journalists should not be at all surprising; in other places, other institutions (State or otherwise) also dictate their rules of narrative legitimacy.

Something similar happens with the fantastical idea of an 'official revolutionary historiography' [130]. Was it not precisely the inability of the Cuban state to generate a historiographical narrative that Reinaldo Arenas

took advantage of to establish his biobibliography? F. Soto confuses State publications ('documentos oficiales') with historiographic narration.

It is not only the military dictatorship leading the Cuban state which imposes rules for the public diffusion of writing. The universities do the same with the formats and contents of the articles which their reviews publish - or don't, such as the *University Presses* whose strict commercial rules, including the protection brands -a true epistemic regulation- the critic F. Soto undoubtedly knows well, judging by his book being published by the University Press of Florida - far from New York University (place of the thesis), from Michigan-Dearborn University (where he was able to find research funds, as mentioned in *The Pentagónia*) or from the College of Staten Island (where he currently works according to the press service of Florida University Press).⁸³

Hence, because the literary critic F. Soto does not define the space from which he *enounces* and because he concludes with calls to 'the individual's spirit of creativity' [130], I believe that the analysis of *The Pentagónia* not only fails to attain the level of complexity of the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, but it also presents and exposes a generalized type of bookish improvisation which can only find refuge and solace in an academic community more concerned with its own codes and affairs than with the analysis of a scriptorial activity or with a frank look at the contemporary or, at least, at the place occupied in it by the author bearing the name of Reinaldo Arenas.

⁸³ The news-for review included in the courtesy copies that the University of Florida maintains: 'Francisco Soto, who was born in Cuba, is assistant professor of Spanish and Latin American literature at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York. His articles, notes, and reviews (in both English and Spanish) on Reinaldo Arenas's work have appeared in such journals as *Revista Iberoamericana*, *Cuban Studies*, *Confluencia*, *Hispania*, and *Utah Foreign Language Review*.'

18. The extension of the present

F. Soto states that, 'Arenas's novels are not a rewriting, or a recording, or an excavating of past life, but a vital artistic expression that articulates human experience in the full immediacy of action.' [1994a, 135]. Let us return again to the nineteenth century belief that literature can and should recount development. My hypothesis goes exactly in the opposite direction: Reinaldo Arenas's writing constantly presupposes a limit to the writable, which makes all literary activity alien to development, that is to pure happening in its course. 'For this reason,' continues F.Soto 'the *diégèse* of these novels is predominantly composed in the present tense.' [1994a, 135]. This last reference apparently confirms that any idea of 'action' in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* consists of narrative development and therefore that the impossibility of writing *becoming* is more pronounced. If there is pathos, as well as carnival, in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, it doubtless has its origins in this initial feature. The use of the 'present tense' (not as generalized throughout the novels as F. Soto affirms) responds more to this sense of narration as the only possible understanding and unity of what we call action than to the belief *that writing can tell what happens* - a vain nineteenth-century Utopia.⁸⁴

The incomprehension of the literary critic reaches its maximum expression when he maintains that, 'The novels of the *pentagonia* dismantle historiographical discourse through fictionalization; they deny and reject any pretence to an official history of the Cuban Revolution.' [1994a, 135]. What is all historiographic narration other than fiction, as Paul Ricoeur [1983-5] has clearly demonstrated? More precisely, in the use of and play with this

⁸⁴ Refer to *Temps et récit* [P. Ricoeur, 1983-5] for the relationship between verb tenses, present, idea of action and change and history, especially volume II, section 3.

fictitious condition of historiographic accounts, Reinaldo Arenas shows his creative originality.

All historical narratives aspire to legitimacy - one could say verisimilitude also - and it is for precisely this reason that they are often distinguished from other narrative styles. The idea of an 'official history' constitutes both an analytical ingenuity and a belittling of the creative unfolding of the author we know as Reinaldo Arenas.

19. The *Casa de las Américas* Style

Referring to the 'pentagon', the critic F. Soto maintains that 'These novels succeed in presenting a vital and critical commentary on twentieth-century Cuban politics, economy, and society, and on a more universal level, on mankind's propensity for discrimination, bigotry, and intolerance. In the end, the novels of the *pentagonía* speak not only to the Cuban community in and outside of Cuba, but to all individuals who cherish and respect the individual's right to free expression.' [1994a, 133].

If we were to give credence to this conclusion about *The Pentagonía*, not only could Miguel Barnet and Reinaldo Arenas be considered practitioners of the same activity but the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas would also be that of an encyclopaedist and correspondent who, composing arguments extracted from the media of his biological time, composed a series of *pastiches* which today, under the auspices of certain publishers's lists, are sold as novels. In other words, without a serious epistemic analysis, the thesis of the critic F. Soto - that is, the supposed distinction between the 'documentary novel' and the 'pentagon' - demonstrates precisely the contrary of what he claims to be arguing. In such a sense the epistemic status of the 'history of society' [134:

attributed to M. Barnet] and of the 'historical dimensions of individual human existence' [134: attributed to Arenas] are part of the same hotch potch.

20. Bakhtin, Cronenberg and Arenas

In the terminological confusion *The Pentagónia* inhabits, unfortunately some interesting observations are lost, to the extent that they might have contributed to the observation of the radical notion of *literatura visual*, posited by Arenas, from a different perspective. Let us see an example that is repeated.

Analysing a passage of *Otra vez el mar* F. Soto refers to the routes/car movements of the plot and suggests that these movements are at the same time changes of spatio-temporal dimensions: 'In part I [referring to the first part of *Otra vez el mar*] the reader finds the couple returning in their car to Havana after a short stay in a seaside cabin located in a northern part of Havana province. This initial returning-car spatial marker is the point from which all other time-spaces are recalled.' [1994a, 96]. This cinematographic and cartoon technique - a kind of fade-out which will be analysed at greater length later - F. Soto adeptly places in terms of the 'chronotope' created by M. Bakhtin:

Among the major chronotopes that have endured in the history of European prose, Bakhtin identifies the chronotope of the road as one of the most used: 'The chronotope of the road is both a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement. Time, as it were, fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road); this is the source of the rich metaphorical expansion on the image of the road as a source: <the course of life>, <to set out on a new course>, <the course

of history> and so on; varied and multi-leveled are the ways in which the road is turned into a metaphor, but its fundamental pivot is the flow of time' (*The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 243-44). In *Otra vez el mar* the chronotope of the road rather than dealing with beginnings or new departures, is involved with past events and with memories that have calloused sensibility and have made present life intolerable. Bakhtin's identification of the fundamental pivot of the chronotope of the road as 'flow of time' is evident in the epigraph to part I, 'La memoria es un presente que no termina nunca de pasar'. [1994a, 96-7].

So far, so good. The problems begin with the introduction of such notions as 'the representation of time-space' [96], 'narrated events' [96] and even such declarations as this one referring to *El color del verano*: 'the concern for preserving in fiction this particular era in Cuban history is underscored.' [1994a, 109]. Indeed, if what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* states anything - above all through a theory of writing - it is that any idea of 'representation' is futile, that what can be found is a spatial actuality which comprehends time. It is surprising that amongst all the literary critics who have dealt with the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas no one has noticed this as clearly *cinematographic* or, more exactly, the presence of this cinematographic aspect as a basic component of a theory of writing - and one in which it would not be presumptuous to conjecture that Reinaldo Arenas took to an extreme the ideas of Lezama Lima about the image [see E. Bejel, 1994 on this]. The same could be said of 'narrated events' - there are no events other than those narrated and, even more, an event is such because it is formed narratively.

In this sense, finally, I would consider that an aspect so relevant in the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas cannot be resolved with a mention of M. Bakhtin and a lexical quotation. Having focused on the matter with precision, the

literary critic then - rather astonishingly - abandons it to the obscurity of a quotation and a mysterious category of the 'astute reader' [97].⁸⁵

As was said at the beginning, the purpose here is not a concern with a specific analysis of the novels attributed to Reinaldo Arenas. Nevertheless it seems a waste that no one should yet have bothered to analyse how this notion of space and movement can be read in terms of cinematography and comic strips. In other words, why not think (to start with) that Bakhtin's chronotopes, a film such as *Crash*, a cartoon such as *El Eternauta* and a painting by the Argentinian Guillermo Kuitca have a more significant relation with the notion of territory than all these diatribes about the 'Cuban exile' and 'Cuban history'?

21. A possible version of *Arenitas*

It is interesting to observe the development of *Arenitas*, that bibliographical character who emerges here and there from the academic literary critics. Let us look at an example that can be taken to illustrate this creative birth, above all in the academic market of the United States.

The construction of *Arenitas*, the one pertaining to, for example, the literary critic Francisco Soto, begins in 1987 with a private interview with the person of Arenas. However *Arenitas* in reality starts in 1988 with a doctoral dissertation (PhD) at New York University entitled 'Reinaldo Arenas:

⁸⁵ Cars and roads, images of framing, the present as flux and an idea of 'visual literature': all this can be found in *Otra vez el mar*. Is anything more needed to be able to grasp the later creation of *El color del verano* and, above all, of *El portero*? Or, put more concretely, is anything further required to understand that *Otra vez el mar* has a more meaningful relation to, for example, the idea of the cinematography of David Cronenberg (obviously I am thinking of *Crash*) or of Alex Cox (I refer to *Repo Man*) than to the nineteenth-century exercises of such journalists as Miguel Barnet?

In addition, why, instead of referring the account and the figure of 'La Mosca' [1980a and 1989a] to a vague sense of human nature [see for example D. Koch, 1994] not refer it to an idea of contemporaneity by comparing it with D. Cronenberg's film *The Fly*?

Tradition and Singularity'. There follows a public presentation of the character: '*Otra vez el mar*: el escritor frente a la escritura' [Pennsylvania Foreign Language Conference, 1988-90; Selected Proceedings, pp.352-58] being the occasion.

Arenitas, starting from this first appearance, appears in a general manner in the two periodicals of North American 'cubanismo', as 'Reinaldo Arenas: gran patriota y escritor singular' [Diario las Américas, 1990], 'El escritor Reinaldo Arenas' [Diario las Américas, 1991] and 'El mensaje de Reinaldo Arenas' [El Nuevo Herald, 1991]. *Arenitas* is then, suggests the literary critic, a talented Cuban patriot.

It is now time to situate *Arenitas* as a writer. There appear a series of reviews explaining his books: 'Review of *Old Rosa*' [*The Americas Review*, 1990], 'Review of *El portero*' [*Revista Iberoamericana*, 1991], 'Review of *Voluntad de vivir manifestándose*' [*Revista Iberoamericana*, 1990], 'El portero: una alucinante fábula moderna' [INTI, 1991], 'Review of *The Palace of the White Skunks*' [*Latin American Literature and Arts*, 1991], 'Review of *The Doorman*' [*Latin American Literature and Arts*, 1991], 'Review of *Viaje a La Habana*' [*Revista Iberoamericana*, 1991]. By this stage *Arenitas* has already become a series of books and their basic meanings. Now some specific aspects of this bibliography attributed to *Arenitas* must be explored.

It is in this sense that the papers published in university periodicals are situated: '*Celestino antes del alba*: escritura subversiva/sexualidad transgresiva' [*Revista Iberoamericana*, 1991], 'Reinaldo Arenas and the Cuban Documentary Novel: A Study of *Celestino antes del alba*, *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas*, and *Otra vez el mar*' [*Utah Foreign Language*

Review, 1991-2], 'Celestino antes del alba, El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas, and Otra vez el mar: The Struggle for Self-Expression' [*Hispania*, 1992], 'La transfiguración del poder en "La Vieja Rosa" y Arturo, la estrella más brillante' [*Confluencia*, 1992].

If one looks back over the itinerary of the emergence of the *Arenitas* figure, one can deduce something that the reading of *The Pentagonía* referred to above confirms: *Arenitas* basically emerges in 'Reinaldo Arenas: Tradition and singularity', which is repeated with some added detail and more coherence (already in book form) in *The Pentagonía*.⁸⁶ In other words, this *Arenitas* is a character created by the literary critic Francisco Soto in 1988 starting from his doctoral thesis. This thesis was commented on and complimented, without opinions varying greatly, in various articles and reviews. And, as a consequence, that doctoral dissertation manuscript reached book form in 1994, in *The Pentagonía*. *Arenitas* is a single personage, Cuban and a writer, who travelled from New York to Michigan and from there to Florida, passing through a whole series of universities (in publication form) from Pittsburgh to the far state of Utah. *Arenitas* is a bibliographical character who allows us an (autobiographic) reading, that is, a character through whom we can carry out conjectures regarding an auto/biographical account of his author: write a PhD thesis about a public person, gain an interview with the same, broadcast the character used to interpret that public person in different *media* (above all academic periodicals), and finally publish a book in which these repetitions scattered throughout six years are summarised.⁸⁷ Here is the most immediate

⁸⁶ In 1988, when F. Soto presented his dissertation, he did not yet have access to *El asalto* and *El color del verano*. *The Pentagonía* adds then to the analysis these two texts which, as the author himself recognises, were facilitated to him by Arenas.

⁸⁷ After this (or before, but promising it), a post such as 'Assistant Professor of Spanish and Latin American Literature' is not impossible to obtain in the North American academic market.

conjecture about a series of publications which say more about the critic Fernando Soto and his character than about the deceased public person about whom the first publication emerged.

22. *Andante e finale*

The Pentagonía is a book which refutes itself, that is to say, it is an analysis which eventually denies in its presuppositions and epistemic declarations what it says it proposes to demonstrate.

I said allegory, and so it is. *The Pentagonía*, as well as being an analysis in journalistic style of the writings of Miguel Barnet, constitutes a compendium of what is currently understood as criticism of 'Latin American literature'.

I also said allegory of the analyses of literary criticism dedicated to the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas. *The Pentagonía* is an exemplary exposition of the creation of *Arenitas* by F. Soto as a character with a name and a biography attributed to Reinaldo Arenas (referentialism, 'ressemblance'). This is a creation of literary criticism that Jean Paul Sartre (mentioned in this respect by P. Lejeune himself) defined with exactitude in 1975 (alluding to *Les mots* and his new 'autobiographical projects'):

Je projetais alors d'écrire une nouvelle dans laquelle j'aurais voulu faire passer de manière indirecte tout ce que je pensais précédemment dire dans une sorte de testament politique qui aurait été la suite de mon autobiographie et dont j'avais abandonné le projet. L'élément de fiction aurait été très mince; j'aurais créé un personnage dont il aurait fallu que le lecteur put dire: *<Cet homme dont il est question, c'est Sartre.>* (...) Ce qui ne signifie pas que, pour le lecteur, il y aurait du y avoir coincidence du personnage et de l'auteur, mais que la meilleure manière de comprendre le personnage aurait été d'y chercher ce

qui venait de moi. [Jean Paul Sartre, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Paris, juin 23, 1975].

Reinaldo Arenas is not the issue but F. Soto, who himself is a compendium of the key problems raised by the prevailing critical discourse. The best way of interpreting *Arenitas* and the literary critics dealing with the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas (in this case F. Soto) is to *ask oneself rhetorically* what there is in the bibliographical narrative attributed to Reinaldo Arenas (and in its relation to the auto/biographical story) *that makes the literary critics speak* -in an epistemic sense: the conditions and consequences, for example, of the subject of enunciation in *The Pentagonía* - more of the 'place' they occupy and the bibliographical itinerary they flaunt than of the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas and of the the scriptorial activity which conceives them and circulates them.

Chapter 6

1. The Semiotics of Laughter

There exists a laughable work on Arenas's laughter which is not far removed from those which confuse Reinaldo Arenas - a Cuban exile, who died in the United States in 1990 - with the characters in novels attributable to an author bearing the name of Reinaldo Arenas.

In this work one can read conclusions such as the following: 'Si hay algo en lo que todas las teorías y puntos de vista sobre la risa están de acuerdo, es en la naturaleza ambigua y contradictoria de la misma.' [Urbina, 1994: 205]. The obviousness of this would not constitute anything unusual in an academic paper if it were not for the fact that in order to achieve it the academic literary critic had had to pass through Plato, Socrates, a certain Van Hoof and Peirce. If this were not already alarming in and of itself, after fifteen semiotic pages we find another conclusion worthy of anthologising: 'La risa es entonces en Arenas una bofetada; una sonrisa, un simple gesto tiene a veces un significado zahiriente, en un ataque abierto...' [Urbina, 1994: 216].⁸⁸

Another work to follow this path of confused semiotic purposes (or should that read, of confusing *à propos* semiotics?) is one entitled *La textualidad de*

⁸⁸ On this matter, Arenas's opinions on Urbina in his letter to Jorge y Margarita Camacho (junio 17, 1990), are highly relevant [Arenas's Collection: box 23, folder 7-8].

Reinaldo Arenas. Juegos de la escritura post-moderna, by Eduardo Béjar, which consists of 264 pages in which Arenas is not touched or, so to speak, is touched only inadvertently. These primitive epistemological exercises have already been commented on in Chapter 3.

In the *narrative unity*, already complex in its own right, of what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, such 'semiotic' analyses can only be taken in the spirit of carnival with which, it would appear, Arenas has infected some literary critics in North American universities.

2. Arenas in Books

Despite a certain notoriety acquired by the historiographical character we know as Reinaldo Arenas, acquired on the one hand as the *subject* of academic reviews and, on the other, as an auto/biographical story in the Spanish language market, the books devoted to Reinaldo Arenas are few, or virtually non-existent since, independent of any evaluative judgment, many of them are sold out or simply out of print.

As far as I have been able to ascertain in the course of my research, six years after the physical disappearance of Reinaldo Arenas the person - the end of the writer's biological dimension and the definitive beginning of his condition as a historiographical character - only eight works have appeared devoted entirely to what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* over a period of eleven years stretching from the appearance of the first work [Rozencaig, 1986] until the last one published [Soto, 1994a].

The first, in 1986, is *Reinaldo Arenas: narrativa de transgresion* by Perla Rozencaig. The next is *La textualidad de Reinaldo Arenas. Juegos de la*

escritura postmoderna [1987] by Eduardo Béjar. *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas* is Roberto Valero's book, published in 1991. Félix Lugo Nazario published *La alucinacion y los recursos literarios en las novelas de Reinaldo Arenas* in 1995. *Reinaldo Arenas: The Pentagonía*, published in 1994 and written by Soto, is possibly the book to have received the most effective marketing but is undoubtedly not the best of those written on the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

Then there are three books I consider it vital to consult in order to have an idea of the literary criticism hinging on Arenas and which in reality constitute an ordered series of works. One of these, published in 1990 undertaken by Rozencvaig and Hernández-Miyares, is *Reinaldo Arenas: alucinaciones, fantasía y realidad*. Another, perhaps the most complete of all those devoted to Arenas's *oeuvre*, is that published in 1992 under the name of *La escritura de la memoria* by Ottmar Ette which, with two editions, has already practically become a classic amongst the works devoted to Arenas. Finally, *Reinaldo Arenas: Recuerdo y Presencia* appeared in 1994 from the pen of Reinaldo Sánchez.

3. *Influenza*, Influence

Each time the auto/biographical story we call Reinaldo Arenas mentions 'Virgilio' [Piñera] or 'Lezama' [Lima] [see for example: Arenas, 1992; Hasson, 1992a and F. Soto, 1990] it is not in order to explain any 'influence' or 'tradition'. Arenas refers to Virgilio, as he does to Lezama, in order to praise his gifts as a writer, to tell him how he influenced him in his readings or how he transmitted practical advice about writing.

Yo visitaba a Virgilio Piñera en su casa a las siete de la mañana. Era un hombre de una laboriosidad incesante; se levantaba a las seis de la mañana, colaba café y a esa hora me daba cita para trabajar en mi novela *El mundo alucinante*. Nos sentábamos uno frente al otro. Lo primero que me dijo cuando comenzamos fue: <No creas que hago esto por algún interés sexual; lo hago por pura honestidad intelectual. Tú has escrito una buena novela, pero hay algunas cosas que hay que arreglar>. Virgilio, sentado frente a mí, leía una copia de la novela y donde consideraba que había que añadir una coma o cambiar una palabra por otra, así me lo decía. Siempre le estaré agradecido a Virgilio por aquella lección; era una lección, más que literaria, de redacción. Fue muy importante para un escritor delirante, como lo he sido yo, pero que carecía de una buena formación universitaria. Fue mi profesor universitario, además de mi amigo. [Arenas, 1992: 105].

At no moment, at least as far as I have been able to ascertain, does Arenas directly link his idea of literature and his literary conceptions to any Cuban author whatsoever. What he does instead is to construct a referential past, a space for scriptorial activity, placed behind any literary consideration, into which *one looks*. Evidently Lezama Lima is the dominant figure in this place and it is in this sense that I interpret the essay attributed to Arenas himself, *Lezama o el reino de la imagen*, and also his idea of 'visual literature'. There is, nonetheless, an exception to these absences of direct links and, paradoxically, this does not refer to a Cuban writer but to an Argentinian one: without any doubt this is the presence of Jorge Luis Borges.

The linking of Arenas with 'the Martí/martyrian tradition' [Cabrera Infante, 1992], with 'the Cuban documentary novel tradition' [F. Soto, 1994a] or with 'the baroque' of Lezama Lima [O. Rodríguez Ortíz, 1980] is an inevitable and predictable *statement* from the literary critics who, for the

great part, work in North American universities and continue reading the contemporary publishing market through the narratives termed 'history of literature'. They do so, having failed so far to grasp that the originality of writings such as those attributed to Arenas lies precisely in the proposal of a notion of literature in which to distinguish between 'literature' and 'history' is irrelevant because creating literature has become - in Arenas as in Borges - a reconfiguring [*refiguration*: P. Ricoeur, 1983-5, III, 9-15] of the history of literature itself again and again (in terms of scriptorial activity).

4. Hallucination and literary resources in the novels of Félix Lugo Nazario
Ignoring such gems as 'literary essentiality' [p. 7], 'invertebrate and chaotic nature' [p. 11] and 'the expression of the Cuban national soul' [p. 12], I wish to move directly to the biographical introduction offered to us parsimoniously by the literary critic Nazario in his analysis of Reinaldo Arenas:

Reinaldo Arenas nació en 1943, en pleno campo, en un lugar situado entre Holguín y Gibara. Estudió Filosofía y Letras en la Universidad de la Habana. Ha publicado hasta el momento cuatro novelas, dos volúmenes de relatos y un poema épico. Su obra ha obtenido un reconocimiento universal tanto del público como de la crítica. Abandonó su país en el 1980 por el puente marítimo de Mariel, luego de haber sufrido la censura, el acoso y, finalmente, el exilio. Ha obtenido las becas Guggenheim y Cintas. Ha sido profesor de literatura en la Universidad Internacional de la Florida y profesor visitante del Center for Interamerican Relations de Nueva York, ciudad en la cual residió desde 1980. [Lugo Nazario, 1995: 8].

The literary critic Nazario cannot possibly have read *Antes que anochezca* but must have read the bookflaps with 'biographical and bibliographical

details' on *Otra vez el mar* published by Argos Vergara in 1982 where exactly the same biographical commentary on 'Professor Reinaldo Arenas' (Nazario and Argos Vergara *dixit*) can be read.

The literary critic Nazario did in fact what any reader who is looking along bookshop shelves does: to think of the biography of an alleged writer in terms of the compound past (solemnity, grandiloquence and factualism are always confused in such cases) and to construct the said auto/biographical account of the author in question (an image) from the bookflaps, that is to say, from what Gérard Genette in 1979 called *paratexte* [G. Genette, 1979: 87]. And here we have something interesting: for the critic Nazario the bookflaps of the books attributed to an author called Reinaldo Arenas *prove the veracity* of the very text executed by this book - to such a point that he even reproduces them in his fictional accounts. Why? Because he is attempting to construct the principal character - the Hero - of whom he is to speak and whom he will try to identify with the author of Cuban origin bearing the name of Reinaldo Arenas.

This is the character-writer *Arenitas* (Nazario's Hero in this case) who emerges once again. The literary critic begins his fictional tale by presenting to us, biographically, a character of his own invention who 'studied Philosophy and Arts in the University of Havana' [p. 8] - which, as has been pointed out, can also be read on the bookflaps of *Otra vez el mar* (the Argos Vergara edition) - and who, in addition, is a writer.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ That it should be placed in the foreground of the auto/biographical account is worth highlighting not only because it shows the paratextual behaviour exercised unwittingly by the critic Lugo Nazario but also the need for this account to be at the centre of the *legitimacy* of the literature attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, a legitimacy with which Arenas himself played but which in this case also serves the critic Lugo Nazario's innocent purposes. 'A través de diferentes entrevistas, conferencias, recitales, y de nuestros dialogos epistolares y telefónicos, *es decir, mediante nuestra relación directa*, he descubierto...' [Lugo Nazario, 1995: 8; italics are mine]. This is the <I saw! I touched! I was with him!> to which I referred at the beginning of this thesis.

Having thus placed *Arenitas* on the anagraphic register, let us see what else his inventor has to tell us about him.

En mi exégesis, las novelas aparecen para estudio siguiendo el orden biográfico que originalmente se propuso el narrador y así mismo las intenciones con las cuales las mismas fueron escritas y no necesariamente el orden tan considerablemente azaroso de sus redacciones como de su publicación. Así podrá percibir mejor el lector la evolución de la infancia, la adolescencia, la juventud y la madurez del protagonista. [Lugo Nazario, 1995: 10].

Arenitas is then a writer of autobiographical novels.

Debo aclarar, para una mejor comprensión del ordenamiento de las novelas de Reinaldo Arenas [the literary critic Nazario continues] que el autor se propone escribir una serie de cinco narraciones, de las cuales ha finalizado cuatro y mediante las mismas se propone narrarnos toda su vida y que dominará "Pentagonía". El término "agonía" hace referencia, según sus propias palabras, "a los cinco infiernos (edades) que ha tenido que sufrir en el transcurso de su existencia". [1995, 10].

Having presented *Arenitas*, the hypothesis for the following two hundred pages will be to see how the definition of 'hallucination' in the small Illustrated Larousse (1950 edition) can explain to us the autobiographical novels written, according to Nazario, by *Arenitas*.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ As if this were not enough, the critic adds in the manner of a background procession a constant reference to Cuban State chronology, a *historicism* which we could say reaches its maximum expression in the absolute interpretation of *El mundo alucinante*. Lugo Nazario declares, '<La carnavalización>, como principio artístico, implica entre otras cosas, "la coronación y descoronación de los valores oficiales" de la sociedad, inclusive de los valores literarios; lo que explica el por qué del tratamiento irreverente de los escritores hacia las normas sagradas de la novela tradicional.' [Lugo Nazario, 1995: 126]. It is a thesis made up of misunderstandings. And he continues, in order to leave no doubts, 'En otras palabras, Arenas aprovecha el margen y la frecuencia para subvertir valores establecidos que provee la novela carnavalesca para articular en forma de relato su desacuerdo con la revolución institucionalizada y, por ende con el orden establecido y sus valores oficiales. Como podrá observarse, el principio

The literary critic offers one final caution to the reader:

Si la novela de Reinaldo Arenas resulta para muchos lectores más difícil de entender que la de otros escritores contemporáneos, es porque exige, para ser comprendida a cabalidad, la consideración detenida de algunas concepciones artísticas e ideológicas actuales que generalmente se pasan por alto al leer sus novelas como lo son las estructuras combinatorias clásico-populares, el estructuralismo formalista, el dialogismo bajtiniano y sobre todo, la consciencia de la existencia de "la obra abierta". [Lugo Nazario, 1995: 10-1].

Is this clear enough? First the critic's book and then *Arenitas'* novels. In this way it might be possible to understand something of this fiction and of its Hero, both invented by 'the Professor of Spanish Literature at the University of Puerto Rico, Aguadilla campus'.⁹¹

Now we are on course. The other 222 pages of *La alucinación y los recursos literarios en las novelas de Reinaldo Arenas* do not need to make much effort to tell this autobiographical itinerary of the character Arenitas, in this case invention of the literary critic Félix Lugo Nazario.

carnavalesco de degradar valores oficiales se corresponde con el propósito velado y original del autor para criticar los valores del nuevo régimen del 26 de julio; así Arenas recurre al discurso carnalesco para expresar el sentido de la situación concreta en que se encuentra Cuba.' [Lugo Nazario, 1995: 127]. *Arenitas* is turned into the 'critical conscience' of the band of Fidel Castro and his henchmen; Arturo and all possible stars free us from these State-journalistic exercises.

⁹¹ As can be seen, over and above many apparent dissimilarities, the idea of the 'fictionalization of the real' which sustained the work of the literary critic F. Soto [1994a] is the same as we find in the 'profesor de literatura' Lugo Nazario. 'The novel is a verbalization of reality, an imaginary situation which, corresponding to an imaginary discourse, uses reality as its primary referent.' [Lugo Nazario, 1995: 85], an idea which, as with F.Soto, appears again and again throughout the text. This is the notion of literature that largely prevails in the literary critic's engaging with Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre*.

5. Arenas in the Actuality of Bodies and Historiographical Narratives

One of the salient characteristic, as has been suggested, of the academic works of literary criticism engaged with what we term Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is that they try to achieve *legitimacy* through the exposition of bibliographical certainties which nearly always take the form of the unpublished, of the not yet published or of the presumably not yet said.⁹²

Bibliographical narratives are never certainties and always conjectures. I believe that what we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* demonstrates and teaches this. In this sense the behaviour of States - through their governments or institutions - has always been the same in that they attempt to use a bibliographical justification - in this case it little matters whether this be legal, journalistic, historical or literary - in favour of their measures of force and administration. It is from this perspective that one can interpret the decisions of the military dictatorship governing Cuba, which so much concern the critics dealing with Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, because what they are trying to do (ineffectually), with or without Miguel Barnet, is to control the historiographical narrations in order to be able to argue with them in the situation which currently dominates what is seen and heard in the mass communication media. To proceed along this path, as do F. Soto and others, is to confuse the condition of narrativity of all historiography with the non-

⁹² Francisco Soto's book, *The Pentagonía*, is in this case a perfect example since it mentions and analyses writings of Arenas which had not yet appeared (we are, one supposes, at around 1988) as books, either in Spanish or in their respective English translations. There appears then a complicated network of 'brand names': F. Soto who thanks Arenas for the loan of the manuscripts (copies) in order to be able to carry out the analysis, F. Soto who thanks the publisher and the translator into English for authorizing the use of the translations before their publication and, finally, F. Soto who is grateful for the interchange to which Arenas himself acceded to comment on and clarify certain aspects of his works (in this regard see the acknowledgments and the introduction to *The Pentagonía*: Soto, 1994a).

scriptorial dimension in which the day-to-day element of the mass media, governments and bodies is handled.⁹³

The attempt at a 'historiographical control' [Soto, 1994a] is inconsistent in its own terms given that, if by historiography we understand 'a history of histories' and if it is true that each enunciator is free to narrate a history (to search for its legitimacy) as seems best to him, what is produced by the mixture in the market for histories can be guaranteed by no-one, due to the number of dissimilar elements entering into play.⁹⁴ It is for this reason, amongst others, that Paul Ricoeur understands historiography itself as a *mise en intrigue* [P. Ricoeur, 1983-5: III]. Even if, as has been said, Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* has a Borgesian originality, it is precisely that of having understood this historiographical condition and, moving on from there, of having produced a double movement which, at the same time as postulating an idea of literature, conjectures up on its historiographical place - its market space, its space within the history of literature, the sources of his books, the most relevant interpretations of his novels, etc.

The actuality with which historiography is concerned exists, then, in relation to notions of past, history and fiction, inter alia, to mention them briefly. What critics and the media term 'de actualidad' exists in relation to the *poder de policía* of state organs - as Arenas well knew - and not to possible scriptorial activity. We turn back here to the *biological dimension* which no analyst of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* considers: that which occurs, becoming ('devenir'), where Reinaldo Arenas's biological person could be found and

⁹³ Neither is what the critic F. Soto calls 'novel of testimony' [1994a] a Cuban novelty, although journalists such as Miguel Barnet may do their best to tropicalize such a freak.

⁹⁴ In fact, if there should exist a parameter of historiographic selection, as it seems ultimately there must, this undoubtedly would not be in relation to the possible arguments but to paratextual schemes of mercantile selection.

was to be found, has no possible writing.⁹⁵ Reinaldo Arenas, as was said at the outset, is a biobibliographical reality.

6. An Informed Reader

As has already been suggested, the auto/biographical account is one of the paratext's basic elements in Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre*. A poor approximation to, or reading of, this account would obviously have consequences on the very concept of the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas if, as conjectured, Reinaldo Arenas's notion of literature turns upon, moves and constructs from the paratextual space.

Celestino antes del alba (1967) inicia el ciclo que comienza con la infancia del poeta-narrador en un medio primitivo y ahistórico; continúa con la adolescencia del personaje durante la dictadura batistiana y precastrista *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* (1980) que culmina con *El Mundo alucinante* (1969), donde el autor expresa su desengaño con la Revolución; sigue con su obra central *Otra vez el mar* (1982) que abarca todo el proceso revolucionario cubano desde 1959 hasta 1970, la estalinización del mismo y el fin de una esperanza creadora; prosigue con *El color del verano*, novela que culminará en 1980 con la toma de la juventud cubana de la embajada de Perú en la Habana y que refleja su vida picaresca, desgarrada y rebelde de esa juventud, sus deseos de ser jóvenes y de existir como tales. La pentagonía culmina con *El asalto*, suerte de árida fábula sobre el futuro de la humanidad. [Lugo Nazario, 1994: 10].

⁹⁵ Affectivity does not have a name but physical dimension and the handling, management and expectations, regarding this biological dimension without writing, is what the narrations should function upon or, even more importantly, that upon which the series of images ('horizonte de expectativa') of the narrations themselves should fall. I believe the words of Arenas should be seen from this perspective: 'El obsoleto de las palabras, representado en mis novelas por el silencio, es lo que me exige expresar "vivencias", "sensaciones", "emociones"...' [Rozencaig, 1981: 45].

How should this statement be read? To 'correct' some of the information is of course, less useful than to conjecture as to the reason for its origin. As has already been said, the 'pentagonía' constitutes a bibliographical reading of the author Reinaldo Arenas (and one which, it must be said, the critics have since continued) probably conceived at the moment when the manuscript of *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* acquired public form and in fact only after 1980, the point at which Arenas began to publish his manuscripts and establish his bibliographical narration.

Without a reading of this paratextual conception and functioning and likewise without a full critical bibliography, it is not to be wondered that for the critic Lugo Nazario the 'pentagonía' is composed of six novels and that *El mundo alucinante* no longer occurs in the times (of the account) of Fray Servando Teresa de Mier but 'during the pre-Castro Batista dictatorship' [p. 10]. The critic in question is demonstrating unwittingly (and with his eyes shut) the close relationship between literary approximation and paratextual perspective, which I am claiming characterizes all of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

7. A Theory of Writing

'<Ternura>, escribí entonces, y de inmediato recordé que las emociones no podían actuarse sino que debían surgir de una acción concreta, representable, taché la última palabra y en su lugar puse <Caricias>.' *La piel y la máscara* [J. Díaz, 1996: 32]

The relationship mentioned between what we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* and the name of Jorge Luis Borges can be looked at, to begin with, from the consideration of a theory of writing: that is, from a consideration

which situates an idea of scriptorial activity as the origin of all ordering and composition in the realm of books.

One of the earliest important works devoted to Reinaldo Arenas was that of Alicia Borinsky [1975] who did, in fact, try to link Borges's *Pierre Menard* and *El mundo alucinante* from a notion of writing/re-writing. What is interesting in the proposal, however, did not live up to expectation. What is unsatisfactory can be summarized as follows: (1) the idea of 'lectura' (reading) is not altogether clear, (2) the question of 'veracity' with regard to texts is not dealt with to the full, (3) at no point is the relationship between (the activity of) writing and history, which appears persistently, at least in *El mundo alucinante*, mentioned, and (4) consideration of the 'autobiographical' aspects turns out to be equally imprecise since it does not stipulate its functions or uses, be this with regard to Menard, Quixote, Borges, Servando or Arenas.

In reality, 'Re-escribir y escribir' is, more than an analysis, a descriptive work - which is confirmed also by the extensive quotations which appear (extensive for an essay of 11 pages) - in which an aspect which characterizes all of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is put forward without being resolved: if precisely what permits us to speak of <an *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas> is a 'theory of language' [Borinsky, 1975 : 616] and if this is in reality the name for a scriptorial activity, how then can the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas be read in relation, no longer just to Borges, but also to the very idea of the history of literature?

The principal emphasis in A. Borinsky's description is focused on the fact that, both in Borges's *Menard* and in *El mundo alucinante*, there exists a diminution of the figure of 'producer of text': 'Al leer "Pierre Menard"

hemos diseñado una escena básica: la insistencia de palabras que aparecen en un texto sin productor fijo. Este vacío de productores es efecto de un juego textual; Pierre Menard repite el movimiento de repetición ya presente en *don Quijote*. Su proyecto reaparece en *El mundo alucinante*, novela del joven escritor cubano Reynaldo (sic) Arenas.' [Borinsky, 1975: 609]. Thirteen years later, another analysis positions itself curiously within the same perspective. I say curiously because Andrew Bush's analysis starts not only from a supposed relationship between Borges and Arenas but also repeats, on the basis of psychoanalytical jargon and a notion of 'Riddled Text', Borinsky's hypothesis, 'the riddled text is one which, having failed to learn the *Nom-du-Père*, will not be led out of the mirror stage.' [Bush, 1988: 375].

In reality, Andrew Bush refers more in his work to Borges than to Reynaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* and, analysing some short stories, attempts to demonstrate how texts such as '<El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan>' provides a critical perspective by which the model of an ineducable text may be replaced with a paradigmatic process of language acquisition undertaken by the text itself.' [Bush, 1988: 385]. Perhaps what is most interesting in A. Bush's analysis is the idea of *silence* to which he ascribes this 'process of language acquisition' which, although not remarked upon or highlighted by Bush himself, would have been an excellent starting point of, for example, an analysis of *Celestino antes del alba*.

Beyond the exercise of 'a Lacanian reading of Arenas's metonymy' [Bush, 1988: 392], this analysis makes no new contribution, since the interesting proposal of considering a 'process of language formation' *in the text* - whose origin would be a silence, a concealment - is eventually placed inside a

psychoanalytical conceptualization which provides no reply whatsoever to the question posited by A. Borinsky in 1975.

Other analyses, such as that for example of A. Herrero-Olaizola [1994] (six years later than A. Bush's work), turn on the same questions but placed within the perspective of what some call 'modernity' (or 'postmodernity' that for purposes of nomination comes to the same thing), without the open question arising from A. Borinsky's work having been resolved or criticised or the argumentative context changed.

In the same sense Soto [1991] and Pagni [1992] in their analyses - both of *El mundo alucinante* (Pagni) and of *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* (Soto) - speak of a 'transgressivity' which in some way links a language and an idea of writing but without ever explaining such notions. A. Pagni's work was published in 1992 and that of F. Soto in 1991, that is to say, 17 years after the first analysis with any degree of argument devoted to the relationship between Borges and Arenas, and also (and above all) to the mention of an activity or perception of writing linking Menard to Fray Servando.

Throughout the course of this bibliographical narratives, then, what has arisen repeatedly is a notion of *re-writing* without ever, on the other hand, outlining its epistemic consequences. To those works already mentioned there could also be added those of R. Romeu [1993], L. Tomas [1991], and E. Elorriaga [1986], to mention a few. On the other hand, as is obvious, within this *re-writing* line of argument can also be placed all those works which appeal to the notion of 'historical discourse': P. Rozencvaig [1986], R. Ocasio [1988], M. Miaja de García [1977] and O. Rodríguez Ortiz [1980].

Ottmar Ette's study [1992], as I have already indicated, with its theory of 'cycles' in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, is that which most closely approaches the proposal of a theory of writing as an agglutinative element of that uneven set of narratives we know as the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

By other means and from a perspective limited to *Termina el desfile*, Solotorevsky [1991] proposes a question central to Arenas' *oeuvre*; that is, in what context 'fiction' is produced with regard to historical narrative. As a result we have a new definition of 'the historical' more than a characterization of the idea of language in Reinaldo Arenas. This is the now famous *historicism* - 'literary discourse' versus 'historical discourse' being its most common form - seen again and again in analyses dedicated to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. There are questions which do not appear in Solotorevsky's analysis, although it might often appear to be drawing near to them: in which writing conditions - under which gnoseological assertions - can a fictional narrative corrupt the verisimilitude and stability of historical narratives or, to put it better, what are the literary conditions of a contemporaneity where a book which is sold as a novel directly implicates historiographical composition? In other words, the very idea of 'referent' - historical or otherwise - is what Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* brings under discussion. Therefore it can be said that analyses based on so-called 'historical discourse' actually constitute a minor variation of the notion of re-writing under which many of Reinaldo Arenas's books have been considered.

In his 1980 analysis of Arenas, O. Rodríguez Ortiz maintains,

...Cabrera Infante decía en una entrevista, cuando señalaba su trabajo con la textualidad y la lidia de Carpentier con los contextos, muy conocidos de antemano, capaces incluso de

constituir un "territorio no sólo explorado sino cartografiado y hasta ilustrado", puesto que "para Carpentier lo cubano es siempre tópico, referencia literaria y su lenguaje está siempre en función de la traducción, es decir, de lo traducido y traducible". (...) Esta misma observación la remata González Echevarría al estudiar a Cabrera, Sarduy, Lezama. Insiste en esa contextualidad traducida de Carpentier, muy especialmente cuando en ella está implicada la historia: el contexto convertido en texto, lo contextual arrancado de lo literario; textos que se saben contexto e historia que no se puede encontrar sino en las crónicas, las enciclopedias y las bibliotecas. [Rodríguez Ortiz, 1980: 48-49].

These observations are undoubtedly of service in verifying an already half-glimpsed result: *all paratext already possesses a textual reading which comprehends it* [Eco, 1979 and 1994]. What is interesting, as this work tries to do, is to place oneself prior to this to see how it is that paratext determines text (and not only in historiographical terms) or, rather, how in what we currently call 'literature' (contemporary literature) - *littérature au second degré*, let us say - a paratext's definition and precision are what produce the essential writing conditions for a text. Consequently, as suggested, there would no longer be 'literature' but a literature of literature or, expressed with greater precision and simplicity, there would in reality be scriptorial activity applied to different areas.

8. The Carnival of Literary Criticism

The inability of the analyses of literary criticism devoted to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* to step over a certain epistemological threshold is repeated constantly. This limitation finds its highest expression, its stereotypical mode - which it would be better to call confusion and carnival - in the hallucinatory theory of the 'semiotic episodes' of the literary critic Félix Lugo

Nazario [1995, 148 ff.]. These constitute, according to the critic 'aquellos segmentos alegóricos de la narración en cuyo interior se ocultan y se enmascaran sucesos de la vida real que nosotros podemos descifrar mediante la interpretación de las claves (signos) que dentro de su textura disimula el autor.' [1995, 148]. This statement contains all those confusions and misunderstandings identified so far in connection with the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas, such as 'real life', 'decipher', 'claves (signs)', 'the author disguises'.⁹⁶

The *Arenitas*, then, created by the critic Lugo Nazario is the classic conspiratorial character to whom many of the academic critics who claim to deal with 'Latin American literature' resorted and still resort. <There exists a character,> goes this theory, <called Reinaldo Arenas, who is an author and who at first sight cannot be found; in order to see him the reading of the critic is needed to dig out what is *true*, that which is hidden, that which really counts. At the end of the day, the sense of all literature is to pry into, to meddle in the author's 'real life', in other words, the author only exists if we dream up a real life.>

Evidently, the only way of concluding all of this is by saying that 'la acumulación de estos episodios semióticos evidencia la persistente, continua y variable polémica encubierta con la realidad revolucionaria que se esconde y enmascara en los contextos narrativos de *El mundo alucinante*.' [1995, 155]. Historicism is always understood through the same words, whose

⁹⁶ Lugo Nazario declares that, 'La situación contemporánea (sic) y algunos hechos específicos relacionados con la vida del autor aparecen como diluidos y disfrazados de los otros tiempos, gentes y lugares, sobre todo en España, Francia y México; pero permanecen "descifrables" y "legibles" en interacción -a través del lector- con el contexto histórico y cultural extratextual. En efecto, la propia textualidad de *El mundo alucinante* está orientada hacia un tipo de "diálogo" -encubierto, polémico, violento y paródico, pero también cariñoso con la Revolución.' [1995, 149]. Could there be a confusion more similar (than this) to the journalistic ideas of Miguel Barnet and Associates? The literary critics and Casa de las Américas meet again.

journalistic meaning, as is known, can be something and its opposite without anything changing very much. 'Debe quedar claro,' maintains a convinced Lugo Nazario, 'que *El mundo alucinante* no constituye un panfleto político; como obra artística representa una libre transformación de los contextos históricos y culturales mediante el supremo acto de la fabulación literaria.' [1995, 155].

Once again we find ourselves facing an unexpected success. The theory of 'semiotic episodes' does not analyse the grotesque, the jest and carnival but rather puts them into practice: no carnival could better these literary critical hallucinations and, as Umberto Eco [1984] has already shown, every carnival is in reality a circus resource employed by governments.

Finally, there is in each of these characters created by each of the academic critics, in every *Arenitas*, an illusion of reality and veracity which can undoubtedly be read in relation to this carnivalization of literary criticism.

9. Valerianas

i. Arenas and *Arenitas*

El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas, by Roberto Valero, is perhaps the only writing devoted to what I call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* which does not suffer from the syndromes and limitations which, as I have attempted to describe, run through the principal aspects of the greater part of the academic studies that deal with the name Reinaldo Arenas.

Even with its imprecisions and lacunae *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas*, initially at least, it distances the bibliographical narrative attributed to Reinaldo Arenas from any 'testimonial' or 'homosexualist' consideration.

The 'I saw him', 'I was with Him' mentioned earlier, which appears every so often in *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas*, may possibly contribute some useful information but it does completely obscure R. Valero as the author.⁹⁷

With a certain tone of sympathetic authority, R. Valero maintains:⁹⁸ 'Algunos estudiosos de la obra de Reinaldo Arenas (Volek y Olivares) también le han aplicado la misma técnica [referring to the idea of carnival taken from M. Bakhtin]. En principio me parece aceptable, siempre y cuando no se tome el marco teórico y se le aplique sin tomar en consideración el universo particular de Arenas. Hacer que el texto coincida con el pensamiento crítico ya existente sería, en gran parte, retornar al medioevo.' [1991, 39]. Passing over the naïve (and vague) aspect of this statement, we can nonetheless observe to what extent (even for a person openly suspicious of what he himself calls 'academic works') the analysis of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* cannot get out of a certain literary schema.

What R. Valero appears not to have taken into account is that the situation of literary studies regarding what by convention we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, far exceeds those extremes of theorization (on the analysts' part) which Valero says he fears. Every critic actually makes of his subject a character (narrative) - which, in relation to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, we have called *Arenitas*. And R. Valero himself is no exception: in his analysis there is no interest whatsoever in dealing with the current literary market or with scriptorial activity in terms of realism or authenticity, which would

⁹⁷ The mention of unpublished sources 'in the author's possession' (read R. Valero) and the very cover of *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas* (in which Valero and Arenas appear together) are perhaps the most attractive and sensationalist elements of this <I saw him>, <I was with Him> syndrome.

⁹⁸ An 'authority' which also emerges, for example, in such passages as this: 'Esta bibliografía de Reinaldo Arenas, activa y crítica, es la más completa que existe.' [1991, 338].

undoubtedly be ways of interpreting Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* without subscribing to the predominant academic tradition of criticism of the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

R. Valero's *Arenitas* is perhaps the most attractive and, above all, the most *effective* in terms of the information he contributes and the *corrections* he establishes with regard to the bibliographical narrative of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. Yet, like all the narratives concerned with Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre*, it depends not only upon the auto/biographical story attributed to Reinaldo Arenas but also upon the bibliographical narrative (be it that attributed to Arenas himself or that of the analysis devoted to him).

R. Valero states that, 'En *Celestino* basta llegar a la escuela acompañado de la madre, o escribir poesías en los árboles, para ser calificado de mariquita y recibir un castigo brutal' [1991, 83]. As a result of this situation he adds, 'Desde la primera novela de Arenas hay una comprensión y defensa del homosexualismo, tema que llegará a su clímax con *Arturo, la estrella más brillante* (Arturo, a partir de este momento), aunque ha estado presente en casi toda su producción' [1991, 83]. Despite the supposed criticism of academic analysis [1991, 10], R. Valero repeats the approach already seen in F. Soto [1991a], E. Béjar [1989] and other analysts.⁹⁹ In some way the idea of a 'homosexual defence' in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* presents itself as a historiographical reading in the same way as the 'pentagonía', although perhaps with less relevance.

⁹⁹ Something similar happens in this passage where R. Valero avails himself of a quotation from *Celestino antes del alba*: '<-¡Suelta ese pájaro! -me dijo mi madre cuando me vio entrar con el pichón de pitirre entre las manos./ -¡No! Celestino y yo lo vamos a criar como si fuera hijo nuestro./ -¡Eso es lo que faltaba!...> Este pasaje también es interesante porque aquí vemos (sic) uno de los vínculos más importantes para probar la homosexualidad del protagonista.' [1991, 95-6].

Something similar happens with the interpretation we know as 'historicist'. As R. Valero says, 'En el terror que presenta el autor (referring to *Celestino antes del alba*), se esconde una condena que rompe los límites geográficos del niño, los de la propia Cuba y abarca a toda sociedad que destruye sus elementos constitutivos como máxima aberración de la naturaleza humana.' [1991, 83]. That 'is hidden' ('se esconde'), in my opinion, makes any commentary redundant. That eternal nineteenth century romanticism is not lacking either. 'Ya destacamos que la relación vida/obra es esencial en la creación de Arenas' [1991, 88].

The character named Reinaldo Arenas constructed by R. Valero - his own *Arenitas*, to continue with the terms already used - is in general perhaps (despite his lacunae and apprehensions) the most effective, from the historiographical perspective, of those created by academic literary criticism.

If on the one hand, R. Valero begins by highlighting the historiographical character of the so-called 'pentagonía' (suggested at least in p. 11 and ff.; 65 and ff.; and 52 and ff.) on the other hand he rapidly forgets this and passes to consider the 'pentagonía' (following Arenas's own purpose, R. Valero speaks of a 'tetralogy', which is only a further proof of the historiographical character of the said pentalogical consideration) as a defence written as such by the author after the appearance of *Celestino antes del alba*.

R. Valero does not explain the consequences that could result from a possible analysis of the 'pentagonía' which starts off by taking these novels to be linked - at least up until *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* - solely by a chronological continuity, solely by the appearance of a supposed continuity in the Heroes' chronological continuity, without them even having the same names, inhabiting the same place or participating in the same plot.

A supposed chronology and the proper name 'Cuba' are the only basis for an *a priori* linking of these three first novels, at least until the early eighties, when Arenas himself initiated the public reading of this 'series'. Neither can Valero's analysis avoid the 'Arenas revealed to me...', a kind of magic formula whose legitimacy would seem to be indisputable and whose success amongst the 'cubanistas' - both native and foreign - has now lasted thirty years.

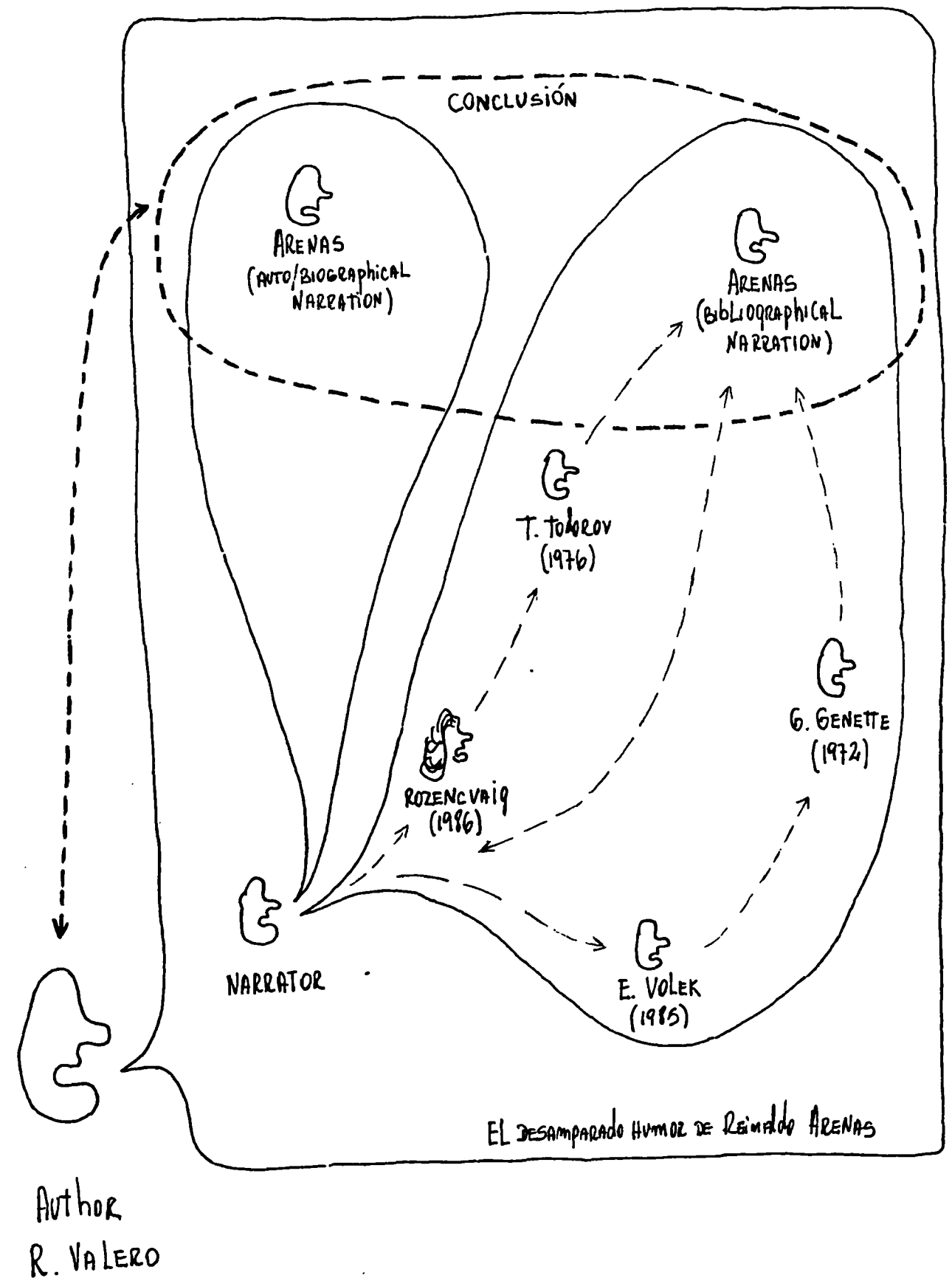
Despite initial criticism of academic works [p. 10 -11 and p. 6] Valero takes up a literary description about 'psychotic discourse' in *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* and the apparent virtues of psychoanalysis in relation to 'visions' apparently had by Reinaldo Arenas [1991, 113 and ff.]. It seems that the person called Reinaldo Arenas 'saw things' and according to Valero [<Arenas revealed to me that...>, p. 114] this is fundamental to the presentation of the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas [1991, 114].

ii. Serpent's Tails

Despite all the precautions, R. Valero's analysis is placed in a classic bookish referentiality which, as has been seen, characterises those literary analyses dealing with 'Latin American literature', and with 'Cuban literature' in particular. If for instance we were to have a look at page 113, the last to be dealt with, there we would see that R. Valero quotes, and comments on a work by P. Rozencvaig [1986] who, in turn, quotes and comments on the Frenchman of Bulgarian origin,

FIGURE 2

In *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas*, the author Roberto Valero presents to us a Narrator who takes forward the line of argument on Arenas by two itineraries that are diverse in principle. On the one hand he constructs an itinerary in order to define a bibliographical narration. On the other hand, in the meantime, he narrates events and offers information in order to define an auto/biographical story. In the conclusion of the book, the Narrator attempts to unify the two itineraries. If we conclude that the author Roberto Valero and the Narrator of *El Desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas* represent the same voice, then this conclusion can be considered as the attempt to elevate the character [Arenitas] created by Roberto Valero in order to refer to Reinaldo Arenas, the Cuban author who died in 1990. In addition, if this association between the Narrator of *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas* and the author Roberto Valero is taken as fact, the conclusion also plays the role of truth-telling in relation to what we know as Reinaldo Arenas's oeuvre since *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas* can be considered, in this sense, its first formulation.



T. Todorov [1976]. R. Valero, then, in order to speak of Arenas makes use not only of P. Rozencvaig's analysis but also of that of T. Todorov through references made by P. Rozencvaig's.

This referentialism, which will be seen again later in relation to E. Volek and M. Bakhtin, and also in relation to E. Volek [1985] and G. Genette [1972 and, Valero adds, 1982], is on the other hand generally characteristic of that literary criticism of the last thirty years which has engaged with the vague entelechy of books known as 'Latin American', and which also runs through almost all analyses of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

iii. Once again to the sea

This ambiguity in R. Valero's approach to what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* unfortunately obscures and hides some hypotheses that remain unexplored.¹⁰⁰

For instance, R. Valero says : 'Gran parte del humor en esta novela, aparte de los aspectos que ya se han señalado, descansa en el juego con el absurdo, juego, en ocasiones, tremendamente poético. El absurdo, al igual que en *Celestino*, tiene una función, destruir nuestro concepto de una realidad "real", valga la redundancia.' [1991, 131-2]. That this general hypothesis should not be developed specifically - for instance, the notion of reader, the

¹⁰⁰ There are even examples of clear contradiction. Consider the following: referring to Héctor in *Otra vez el mar*, R. Valero says 'Lo que interesa al protagonista -y al autor, en última instancia-, más que la denuncia de una sociedad o sistema, es la búsqueda de una expresión, de una enfurecida salvación, de un ritmo. Y si ese ritmo está en el infierno, pues el Canto tiene que ser infernal. Por eso en los últimos renglones de la novela, cuando Héctor está ya próximo a la destrucción, se lee: "Hasta última hora la ecuanimidad y el ritmo: la fantasía..." (418)' [1991, 154]. If this conjecture is given as correct, why continue thinking about that confused supposed analogy between the history of the avatars of Cuban governments and novels such as *Otra vez el mar*? Why not consider directly that the possibility of the invention of a language is more relevant than the supposed search for a never clear 'historical truth'? If Arenas complicates the narrations we call 'historical', it is not because he names them or points them out but because he uses them. In this sense, any investigation of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* involves moving in the direction of the conditions of writing rather than of the academic question of 'genres'.

idea of writing, how perception is described, etc. - seems to be an allegory of the waste of good work in relation to *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas*.

To take another example, 'En realidad,' says R. Valero referring to *Otra vez el mar*, ' "no ocurre nada" en la novela. Son fantasías de Héctor, el único que existe y ha imaginado a los demás. Al final acelera el carro y se suicida para no entrar en la capital.' [1991, 142]. Instead of trying to demonstrate 'Cuban history' under the pretext of referring to Arenas's *oeuvre*, why not underline Arenas's interesting proposition about the problem of events, happenings and their possible writing? The fixation literary critics have with Cuba's governmental and political history pursues R. Valero himself who, in this sense goes back on what is one of his basic positions, that is, the use of Reinaldo Arenas's auto/biographical story as a 'true' and ultimate source. Put another way, had R. Valero questioned himself on the matter of the events in, for example, *Otra vez el mar* he might have discovered a possible reason (which he never mentions) for Arenas's statement that 'el tiempo no me interesa' [see, for example, J. Barquet, 1992 *passim*]. R. Valero maintains, 'Arenas ha repetido en varias entrevistas que para él el tiempo no es importante. Pero con toda seguridad, tanto para Arenas como para sus personajes, el tiempo es -casi- lo más importante que existe.' [1991, 143]. If this statement of R. Valero's were to be taken as true, it would undoubtedly prove difficult to establish a link between Jorge Luis Borges and the works attributed to Reinaldo Arenas. Moreover, the interview with J. Barquet [1992] is enough to prove that Arenas himself did not understand it thus. A systematic retraction is therefore the only way for anyone who had not yet realized that what we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is in fact a constant spatial *figuration* through a theory of writing in which time, as in Borges, is a game, a possible fiction, a narrative aspect. Consequently, I see

as a wasted opportunity in *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas* the absence of any consideration of the gnoseological status of the events and happenings, and of their possible relationship to the writing, above all in the analysis of *Otra vez el mar*.

Here is a further example. If we accept that (in *Otra vez el mar*)

la contaminación política es absoluta; nadie puede evadirse de ella, pues todo es político; hasta quejarse del calor puede ser peligroso (como en *El mundo*, *Persecución* y *El asalto*). De ahí que cuando llega el amigo no hay posibilidades de un encuentro sincero. Todo ha sido envenenado a tal extremo que Héctor piensa que el joven puede ser un policía disfrazado que intenta seducirlo para después denunciarlo. [1991, 149].

If then this is the individual condition, what sense is there in speaking of 'history' (be this of the revolution or of Cuba) other than to boost its essential simulatory character and its constant condition as *fake*?

iv. Epistola Cubaniensis

'*Otra vez*,' says R. Valero 'es superior a las obras anteriores, en muchos aspectos, sobre todo desde el punto de vista estructural, pero es una novela que intentó abarcar demasiado. Estoy pensando en un lector extranjero, no en el caso de un lector cubano que pueda entender todos los códigos, todas sus claves y angustias.' [1991, 161-2]. A conclusion such as this demonstrates the negative consequences of this *historicist* approximation which affects the great majority of critics who have engaged with the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.¹⁰¹ It is precisely 'a foreign reader' who finds himself in

¹⁰¹ When Arenas says that 'el arte no perdona que se haga apología del crimen. No existe la gran novela franquista, como tampoco existe la gran novela fascista ni la gran novela stanilista. No existe ni existirá (aunque en ello se gaste una fortuna) la gran novela castrista.' [Valero, 1991: 186], I believe that what he is trying to point out is the indifferent superiority of the scriptorial activity in relation to any governmental account or, to express it better, how scriptorial activity and the biological dimension do not meet where

the best heuristic conditions with regard to *Otra vez el mar* because, in order to execute a gnosiological itinerary from the reading, he does not need to sustain a supposed 'Cuban history' or the anagraphical persecution of Reinaldo Arenas' auto/biographical account.¹⁰² No one has read the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas in so obtuse and short-sighted a manner as the so-called 'cubanistas' of the North American literary and academic community. What the so-called *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas requires from the analytical point of view is exactly that: to be dealt with by *strangers*, by authors and essayists who will *regard* it as a product of contemporaneity which touches us (nomadism, spatial territorialization and multilingualism would be some of the aspects to consider) and not as an element of the nineteenth century idea of 'national literatures'.

If the characters in Reinaldo Arenas's novels have no way out or escape route, neither do the 'cubanista' literary critics engaged with Arenas. 'Cuba aparece casi siempre aunque la obra aparentemente no tenga relación con la isla, como ocurre con *El mundo*.' [Valero, 1991: 197].

v. The Errant World

R. Valero postulates in a promising manner the beginning of the relationship between historical narration and literary narration, at least with regard to the analysis of *El mundo alucinante* [1991, 220 and ff.] but the lack of precision in the terms used generates confusion. Even the mention of other analyses [Volek, González Echevarría, etc.] only serves to aggravate the

dictatorships (and States) are happening, fatally, tragically. When Arenas says, 'the great Castro novel does not exist and will not exist', he is speaking more of a particular mode of understanding literature rather than of the space called 'Cuba': narration and being are two carnivals not celebrated at the same moment.

¹⁰² This *historicism* of academic criticism dealing with 'Latin American Literature' has been defined with precision by R. Valero himself, referring to *El mundo alucinante*: 'La cubanía de la obra se encuentra en las alusiones al proceso castrista, en la inserción de Heredia en las páginas finales, y en lo autobiográfico.' [1991, 205].

misunderstandings. To equate, for example, Lezama Lima's theory of 'eras imaginarias' with Alejo Carpentier's conception of the 'real maravilloso' constitutes an unfortunate perspective which is then directly linked to consideration of the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas himself. In quoting González Echevarría [1983] to this effect, R. Valero does not see the possibility of finding a close link between Lezama Lima and Arenas, without Carpentier as mediator. As already mentioned, Reinaldo Arenas *radicalizes* Lezama's visual perspective and the theory of 'eras imaginarias', creating a good opportunity not only to describe that theory, but also to indicate the conditions of the theory of writing running through all of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, precisely when defining a possible relationship between historical narration, novel and notion of literature.

R. Valero says, 'Emil Volek (1985: 129) ve el texto como "versiones y diversiones equivalentes, igualmente poco fiables, llenas de una imaginación paranoica, contradictoria; un texto que se repliega, paródicamente, sobre sí mismo. Un verdadero <chachachá> epistemológico y narrativo".' [1991, 220]. It is a pity that what is mentioned in passing should not be dealt with in depth, in the light of the ever useful information given by R. Valero about the auto/biographical story and bibliographical narration of Reinaldo Arenas.

vi. *Rey Mouse*

Another point noted by R. Valero, which unfortunately he does not deal with in depth, is the comic-strip quality running through many of the novels attributed to Reinaldo Arenas. Referring to *El mundo alucinante*, R. Valero speaks of a kind of 'solución que yo llamaría de dibujo animado' [1991, 233] but, other than some quotation and general allusion to, he does not explore the argument, that is, by describing how a *cartoon perspective* - use of images, exploitation of dialogues, an absolute economy of plot, multiplicity

of register (in voices), montage and sequence as the basis of eventuality and succession, etc. - could be a precise descriptive tool for Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

vii. Them, the Others and the Rest

'En "Las ruinas circulares" de Borges,' states R. Valero, 'el protagonista sufre una profunda decepción al descubrir que él no sólo es creador, sino también creación, fantasma de alguien. Borges apunta hacia un mensaje más filosófico. (...) Así el mundo de Arenas se está convirtiendo en un universo donde los personajes se repiten, aparecen y desaparecen.' [1991, 244]. If this conjecture of R. Valero's, which serves to analyse the plot of *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*, had been put into historiographical perspective, Valero himself would have been able to prove how short a distance there was between the 'philosophical message' attributed to Borges and Reinaldo Arenas's narrative. In other words: if *Arturo, la estrella más brillante* were to be read in relation to the idea of a *noveleta* - or, which comes to the same thing, in relation to a theory of writing - it could be proved that 'the creation of being' [Valero, 1991: 244] or, more exactly, the formation of a subjectivity, is the basis of the space and movements that scriptorial activity puts into play - both in Borges and in Arenas.

R. Valero in fact confuses the function of the characters in the plot by using fictional characters to discuss subject formation - basing himself, in the first place, on Arenas's auto/biographical story. This confusion has its roots, as has been seen, in the critic's own lack of conceptual precision and in the notion of the literary that he makes use of in his analysis. For this reason Valero does not observe how close he is to all of this when he maintains, with reference to *La loma del ángel*, 'Tal parece como si Arenas, teniendo en cuenta las más recientes teorías sobre la importancia del lector y el autor,

decidiera no sólo hacer literatura con ellas, sino también burlarse de las mismas.' [1991, 263]. He mocks them, of course, but above all deploys them: not because Reinaldo Arenas the author was an academic who made literature in order to apply his theories but, on the contrary, because there exists in Arenas a theory of writing linked more to a multiple and chaotic contemporaneity than to an ordered and chronological 'history of Cuba'.

viii. Tensions and Extensions

In his conclusions R. Valero states that

Un texto cuyo signo final fuera la desolación absoluta estaría bordeando siempre lo melodramático, o se convertiría en una obra densa, a lo Sábato, o completamente desesperanzadora, a lo Dostoievski. Para balancear esa carga tan deprimente Arenas incorpora casi siempre el humor, ya sea a través del absurdo, el humor negro, los juegos lingüísticos, jaranas, refranes inventados y existentes, trabalenguas, chistes poco artísticos y a veces muy vulgares, el carnaval bakhtiniano, la inversión de valores (como en "Adiós a mamá" y "Bestial entre las flores"), la sátira política, social y literaria, la ironía, el choteo, el comentario socarrón o/e ingenioso, las asociaciones ilógicas, lo grotesco... Cuando esto no ocurre el texto pierde equilibrio y las tensiones literarias se quiebran, como *Otra vez el mar*. [1991, 334].

This hypothesis, as a general *approach* to what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, despite a degree of vagueness, seems to me far more accessible and sensible than much academic analysis, supposedly better put-together and better argued. The problem, nevertheless, as has already been seen, lies in the imprecise vocabulary whose correlative evidently is not an inability of R. Valero's, but a specific and personal point of view as to what is and is not literature.

10. Arenitas's Hallucinating World: a Narrative Chachachá

Tenemos ante nosotros, pues, versiones y diversiones equivalentes, igualmente poco fiables, llenas de una imaginación paranoica, contradictoria; un texto que se repliega, paródicamente, sobre sí mismo. Un verdadero <chachachá> epistemológico y narrativo. [E. Volek, 1985: 194]

Twelve years after its publication, Emil Volek's analysis [1985] remains, for all its limitations, one of the fundamental works in what O. Ette [1992] calls 'bibliografía areniana'. E. Volek's was the first to consider in an analytical manner, on the basis of M. Bakhtin's theories, the argument of 'carnivalization' in *El mundo alucinante*. Until that point, *El mundo alucinante* had chiefly been considered from the perspective of 'history', of 'the historical' or of the 'writing of history', or had not been considered directly. See, for example, G. Zaldívar, 1977; E. González, 1975; E. Sklodowska, 1984; R. González Echevarría, 1983, and J. Deredita, 1975. Even works such as those of C. Fell [1978] and P. Bovi-Guerra [1978-9], which do not deal directly with the historical argument, are written within, and appeal equally, to a certain 'historical context'.

Volek's 'La carnavalización y alegoría en el mundo alucinante de Reinaldo Arenas' imposed the concept of carnival in Bakhtinian terms not only on *El mundo alucinante* but also in relation to all of Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre*. Most works (of a certain length) subsequent to E. Volek's analysis turn upon this argument and upon M. Bakhtin's theories: the extreme case is undoubtedly *The Pentagonía*, F. Soto's book which appeared in 1994 and to which I have previously referred, which not only makes use of Volek's analysis but also in almost two hundred pages does not succeed in adding

anything new to the twenty pages required by E. Volek to propose the argument in 1985.¹⁰³

What is striking is how this analysis, devoted to only one of the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, has been extended by reference and commentary to the consideration of the entire *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas. This situation is what is called narrative efficacy or, more simply, historiographical elaboration. In this sense, then, I believe E. Volek's analysis merits a brief consideration.

E. Volek analyses the narrative voices of *El mundo alucinante* and, with references to M. Bakhtin and G. Genette, argues sustainedly in favour of a counterpoint and superimposition of the same which, as he says,

alternadas y metamorfoseadas una en otra a lo largo de la obra, son, en principio, disfraces de la misma voz. En último análisis, son máscaras retóricas intercambiables, las cuales ocultan y revelan al mismo tiempo, en un juego muy barroco, la profunda *homología* de los discursos, de los enunciados narrativos. En este sentido, pues, entre las voces no tiene lugar una dialogización verdadera y radical, que es -según Bajtin (1972: 184-89)- uno de los rasgos fundamentales de la cultura del carnaval (12), sino sólo una dialogización aparente -retórica y formal-, la cual adquiere, por la repetición y por la permutación de voces, un matiz de *farsa*. [1985, 202].

¹⁰³ What is truly paradoxical is that supposedly *The Pentagonia* does not deal with *El mundo alucinante* - further confirmation of how far-reaching the consequences of E. Volek's analysis of Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre* have been.

As if this were not enough, the absence of any mention of E. Volek in the actual text of *The Pentagonia* (beyond a vague inclusion in the bibliographies) completes the inscription of F. Soto's book in the 'itinerary' fabricated by E. Volek, that is: *El mundo* - Bakhtin-Arenas (bibliography)-Genette-Reinaldo Arenas (auto/biography).

This farce is translated, suggests Volek, to all levels of the same novel and even to its exterior space: the 'narrative chachachá' [193] is a seesaw, a coming and going (un vaivén, un ir-venir). This interpretation of *El mundo alucinante* is the one that has been transferred and imposed to all of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* and up until now no-one has denied or refuted it, but on the contrary it is still employed in all commentaries as a referent, even when not named, as in the case of F. Soto [1994a].

Despite what has been said, and if indeed E. Volek's analysis has been argued seriously, it presents some hesitant aspects which, rather than giving it the lie, demonstrate the epistemic attitude that characterizes it. E. Volek's analysis displays and exercises one of the principal characteristics of academic literary criticism, that is, at best, a complex and sophisticated line of argument inscribed and concluded within a trivial and commonplace frame. To say that *El mundo alucinante* 'resulta ser una obra neovanguardista a medio hacer' [212] is already questionable; what is more, to say it, at the conclusion of an analysis of the narrative voices in that novel seems to be nonsense. Consequently such notions as 'artistic objectives' [212], 'artistic experiment' [191], 'the subconscious' [210], 'a criticism decidedly *from within*' [209], 'History' [204], 'realist biographical novels' [204] and others which emerge here and there throughout E. Volek's work are really demonstrating that, despite the theoretical and taxonomical exercise, the epistemic approach fails. And in this sense, the poverty of the conclusion [cf. R. Valero, 1991] should not be surprising.

It is not, however, the particular assessment of this analysis which is of interest here: what is of interest in E. Volek's work is not in relation to his analysis of *El mundo alucinante* but to the position which this occupies and

develops within what O. Ette calls 'bibliografía areniana' and which we identify as bibliographical narrations.

For E. Volek the bibliographical narration on *El mundo alucinante* is defined in five academic analyses, two of which are devoted exclusively to the novel [R. Jara (1979) and J. Ortega (1973)], another two are comparative studies [A. Borinsky (1975) and Rodríguez Monegal (1980)] and finally a work of general reference [S. Menton (1975)]. For E. Volek this bibliographic narration on *El mundo alucinante* was reduced to certain basic aspects which have 'dejado algo obliterada la situación tal como se ve desde la propia textualidad de la obra, desde su propia estructura artística' [1985, 192]. That is, Volek proposes his bibliographical analysis as a call to the defence of this novel in particular. And here we find what is of interest, given that, in analyses of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, Volek's work is situated precisely in opposition to those espoused by E. Volek himself. For R. Valero [1991], for example, E. Volek's analysis, if still considered from the starting point of *El mundo alucinante*, is nonetheless discussed and transformed in relation to what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.¹⁰⁴

In other words, if E. Volek's 'textual' analysis still prevails (for example, Valero speaks on the one hand '...of Volek's excellent work' [1991, 195] and, on the other also makes as much use of references to M. Bakhtin and to G. Genette as does E. Volek), the *environment* where it is considered has changed perceptibly: E. Volek located some works bibliographically and initiated his analysis from that starting point. Six years later, what could be

¹⁰⁴ It should be noted that we say discussed and not discarded. The relevance of E. Volek's work, I repeat, is linked to the establishment of set *references* regarding what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* and successive analysis, even when relying on his lines of argument, do not discard such references (the notion of 'carnival' and Bakhtin's analyses are the most obvious) but rather take advantage of them. Furthermore, anticipating the conclusions we could even say that the *unity* of these narrations we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is produced from processes such as these that have been set out with regard to E. Volek's work [1985].

considered one of the definitive works in the 'Arenian bibliography', that is R. Valero's book [1991], deals with 'La carnavalización y la alegoría en el mundo alucinante de Reinaldo Arenas' in terms no longer bibliographical but historiographical since R. Valero not only deploys the analysis in terms of *El mundo alucinante* but also in terms of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* and likewise in relation to other analyses, be they of *El mundo alucinante* or the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

In other words, the references to M. Bakhtin, to G. Genette and to a notion of 'carnival' were established, in relation to *El mundo alucinante*, by E. Volek's analysis,¹⁰⁵ whilst the extension of these to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* as a whole constitute a reading which (to continue with the significant example) Valero does not make as much of the works attributed to the name of Reinaldo Arenas as of the bibliography ascribed to him. Beyond any doubt, leaving to one side the narrations attributed to Arenas himself, R. Valero's book represents a turn in the narratives gathered under the name of 'Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*,

¹⁰⁵ The connection between an idea of American Baroque, the analysis of M. Bakhtin (especially the concepts of Baroque romance and carnival) and the theories of critic Julia Kristeva of a *transtextualité* (mainly based on *Séméiotiké* [Seuil, Paris, 1969]) was proposed -probably for the first time- by Severo Sarduy in 1972: cf. C. Fernández Moreno [ed]: *América Latina en su literatura*, Siglo XXI, México.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL NARRATION OF ARENAS'S OUVRE

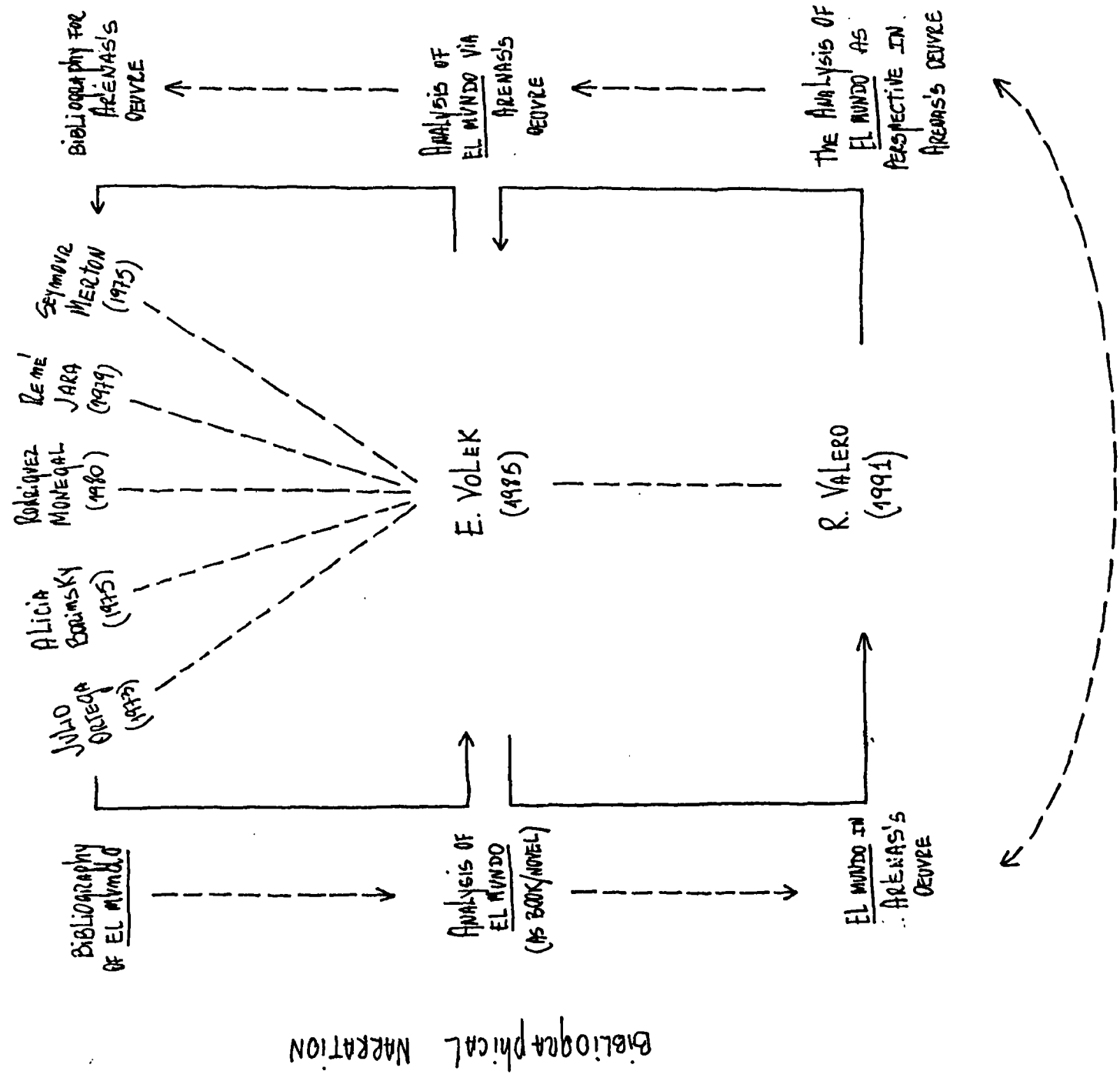


Figure 3.
Steps and movements of the *chachachá* (possible version)

since it is from this moment that a historiographical evaluation makes its appearance. Of the analyses/readings made by academic literary critics of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, R. Valero's book is the first work which could be called *historiographical* since it is here that, as we attempted to see with reference to E. Volek, bibliographical consideration is turned into (temporal) reflection upon various analyses simultaneously: Reinaldo Arenas's auto/biographical story, the bibliographical narrative attributed to the author Reinaldo Arenas, bibliographical narrations referring to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

I said that E. Volek's analysis was interesting not so much in itself as in relation to an *itinerary* - an entire historiographical account - whose scope still prevails in those analyses that claim to deal with Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* [see F. Soto, 1994a]. This itinerary gives different results depending upon the direction in which we move (I should say different *Arenitas*, to continue with the proposed characterization): *backwards*, directing ourselves from Valero's book towards E. Volek's analysis, we would find a historiographical perspective, that is, an image of how, even in 1985, Reinaldo Arenas was above all *El mundo alucinante*. Meanwhile, on the other hand, moving *forwards*, from Volek's article to *El desamparado humor de Reinaldo Arenas* - or, even more so, towards *The Pentagónia* - we find a bibliographical perspective which, minimizing the circumstantial references to *El mundo alucinante*, will convert Volek's analysis into an approach to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, not only in terms of the use of a notion of 'carnival' but, more relevantly still, to the theoretical referentiality (Bakhtin and G. Genette, above all) exercised by that analysis. That is to say, following a chronological sequence of publications, we would obtain a bibliographical perspective from which Reinaldo Arenas, via arguments attributed to the author himself, would cease to be simply *El mundo*

alucinante. But on the other hand it is from the consideration of the possible approaches, that is, establishing a temporal construction from the mutual references made by the analyses, that a historiographical perspective is obtained: Arenas continues being *El mundo alucinante* or, rather that which has been attributed to *El mundo alucinante*. Moving *forwards*, then, we have an idea of 'carnival' applied no longer simply to *El mundo alucinante*, but to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. Moving *backwards*, we have some theoretical/authorial references (Bakhtin, Genette) and a series of notions (carnival, history) applied to the consideration of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

All of this confirms, on the one hand, the efficacy of E. Volek's twenty-page work and, on the other, what has been said of the vagueness and dispersion overarching both R. Valero's book and the two hundred pages published by the University Press of Florida for F. Soto - these do not succeed, even with far superior information available, in improving upon the analytical proposals of 'La carnavalización y la alegoría en *El mundo alucinante* de Reinaldo Arenas'. Consequently E. Volek's description of *El mundo alucinante* continues to be the best that has been said, along the route of what we have called 'historicism', about it: 'En *EMA*, un novelista cubano, escribiendo desde la Revolución, carnavaliza la vida y las *Memorias* de Fray Servando, contemporáneo de la Revolución Francesa y copartícipe de la Independencia americana' [1985, 203]. And if this historicism - which dominates much of the analysis devoted to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, not only the works by Valero and Soto - does not have decisive consequences in E. Volek's work, this is also due to the fact that the said work distinguishes analytically with a certain precision the various levels on which this novel can *move* and concludes reasonably that 'el lector de otro país, de otra lengua o de otro tiempo <reescibe> la obra al leerla sobre el trasfondo de un nuevo contexto' [205]. Because 'este desplazamiento es en

realidad inevitable y es parte de la <vida> de la obra' [205], 'Esta es, en fin, la base racional del delicioso disparate borgeano <Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote>: un libro que está leído en un nuevo contexto y que está transformado y enriquecido por el mismo' [1985, 205-206].

As has been said, every analysis fabricates a character bearing the name of Reinaldo Arenas which it pursues - through reference, representation, verisimilitude, *mimesis* - in the bibliographical narrative attributed to Reinaldo Arenas or the auto/biographical account bearing the name of Reinaldo Arenas. These analyses generally represent another form of bibliographical narrative, no longer attributed to, but referred to by the name of Reinaldo Arenas. For the moment, it suffices to say that E. Volek's *Arenitas* is perhaps of all the characters created by literary criticism (invoking either the name of Reinaldo Arenas or the narrations attributed to him), the most lasting and influential. Consequently I believe that the 'veritable epistemological and narrative <chachachá>' [194] of which E. Volek speaks can be taken to refer not only to the text of *El mundo alucinante*, but also to an incipient idea of paratext (let us bear in mind that Volek only mentions the Gérard Genette of *Figures III: Palimpsestes* and *Seuils* were still to come); it can also be applied (be read in relation) to what has already been discussed as the historiographical narrative referring to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

11. The Priests of Temporality

Shortly before his death, the critic Angel Rama wrote with reference to Reinaldo Arenas:

Más de una vez he escrito diciendo que él, junto con Norberto Fuentes, son los dos mejores narradores que ha dado la

Revolución cubana, un juicio que se basa en su soberana competencia artística como en su capacidad para traducir existencialmente, verídicamente, el clima revolucionario, el fragor, el desgarramiento, la intensidad, la autenticidad de una experiencia que ha puesto en vilo a toda una sociedad llevándola hasta el paroxismo. [A. Rama, 1981: 85].

Curiously enough and although for a diversity of reasons, all the apologists and analysts dealing with Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* have agreed with this statement - from Perla Rozencvaig [1986] to F. Soto [1994a], going through R. Valero [1994], D. Koch [1994] and Lugo Nazario [1995], to make a generic mention of a few.

This is the agreement which I said previously, existed regarding Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* between Casa de las Américas and the Institutes and Departments of 'Latin American Studies', particularly in the United States. For Rama this 'historicism' which, as has already been seen, attempts to define all temporalization according to a governmental calendar, was undoubtedly an *accompaniment* to a journalistic vision of literature, whilst for Rozencvaig, for example, this 'historicism' represents a kind of *critique*, a distancing from that calendar. When counterposed, from the perspective which interests us, they do not differ: in some instances because historicism justifies it, in others because it seriously takes its distance and criticises, this 'historicism' becomes a method which hardly any of the critics who have engaged with Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* have been able to accomplish. That it should be called 'testimony' in some and 'historical reality' in others is only a matter of style.

12. Reading 'Escrito sobre Arenas'

One of the few non-academic works on Reinaldo Arenas' *oeuvre* is that carried out by Severo Sarduy, whose brevity and detail largely overcome the ponderous accumulation to which much academic analysis leads. There are in this piece of writing five propositions which can be chosen indisputably as hypothetical *driving forces* to maintain and describe that narrative corpus we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*:

1. The formation of a subject, the appearance of a narrative identity.

Desde *Celestino antes del alba*, escrita en 1964 (sic), hasta *Arturo, la estrella más brillante*, aun inédita, todo el paisaje cubano -los fragmentos mejicanos o europeos no son más que transposiciones al ocre o al rojizo del persistente gris insular- se va electrizando, demonizando, llenando de encantaciones, de conjuros roncós, de voces sin amo, como si en esos libros -así sucede en el sueño, y en el mundo descifrado por un primitivo o un niño- todo dijera *yo*. [Sarduy, 1991: 331].

This is not relevant of itself, but through it such notions as past, memory and events are *focused*.

2. A temporal conception, or rather a temporalization through space.

En ese tiempo sin tiempo, o más bien, en ese logos sin autoridad ni rescate final, leo hoy a Arenas. En el tiempo envolvente y denso de la siesta, a la luz (inventada, en este lugar que pintó Corot y que sigue fiel a esa paleta apagada, a ese gris mustio; aciago amanecer del otoño en el estanque sin reflejo) de un medio-punto colonial; punzó, amatista, azul cobalto, azul del Caribe. Una raya morada marca el canuto de la caña, el poliedro del anón. Olor a llovizna fresca, manzanas quemadas para un

dios. (...) El tiempo se ha retraído./La Historia es una farsa seria./Despliegue en presencia: inunda las cosas, excesivo, burlón casi, desbordante/ en su elocuencia, el ser./ [Sarduy, 1991: 332].

There is no time in Severo Sarduy's Arenas but temporality, no time but becoming ('devenir') and change: the chronologies and orderings matter less than the appearances and concealments; the chronologies and orderings matter to the extent that they are a function of images, colours and places. Severo Sarduy's Arenas is a fabulator, an inventor of spaces through writing.

3. The sound and the fury are a pair, an agreement governing the *literary* functions in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*: this is the 'clamour' ('estruendo') of which Sarduy speaks [1991, 332]. The sound, says Sarduy, and the fury are a *divisory principle* (*principia membra*) of what can be written and what cannot: the sound and the fury work out at every moment the *point of inflection* of what is pure perception and becoming ('devenir') and what has become writing and meaning. This 'clamour' then which is sound and fury is deaf, also.

Las novelas de Arenas trazan también una progresión *decibélica*: la palabra *estruendo* regresa a cada página de *Otra vez el mar* pero, desde *El mundo alucinante*, ya todo es *audio* pura adivinación, muy cubana, de oyente, *manteia* de lo sonoro que pasa raudo, como el vuelo de la torcaza bajo la luna, como el viento prendido a las ramas del flanboyán: "Es ésta la hora en que los sonidos se transforman y adquieren resonancias extrañas, que parecen clamar (aunque muy discretamente) por la piedad y la melancolía. Desde la jaula te llegan voces, convertidas en susurros respetuosos, y ves hasta el mismo finalizar de la ciudad, y más allá la llanura, replegándose hasta formar un solo límite con el cielo". [Sarduy, 1991: 333].

Here we have, the sound and the fury in Reinaldo Arenas, the 'clamour': uproar and murmur to which *Antes que anochezca* is dedicated. An uproar and murmur named by Sarduy: 'Al terminar la lectura de Arenas la voz del narrador, su acento propio que parecía totalizar las entonaciones, modular las bruscas estridencias del coro, se ha integrado en él: canta con las otras en lo que va siendo un *rumor de fondo*, simetría y reverso del *enemigo rumor*.' [Sarduy, 1991: 334].

4. Characters who are subjects, characters who are as it were (*performatively*) to search, a subjective formation; a coming and going from novel to auto/biography, a movement between writing and perception. It is the *muñeca mecánica* - Argentinian, Arlt's, or Perlongher's - moving in the meanderings of the Caribbean and New York:

Así, aunque encubiertos por la facundia o acribillados por la sorna de un narrador omnisciente y común, desfilan los personajes como en un catálogo de tropos que es a la vez un rápido boceto de algunos tipos cubanos, como los que pueblan, entre volantas y quitrines, los grabados coloniales y fundadores de la nacionalidad, o transpuesto a lo insular, como un breugheliano encuentro del Carnaval y la Cuaresma. [Sarduy, 1991: 334].

They are puppets in reality, negotiating with development, in conflict with change: a leap to an imperfect future which is in fact a past continuous. A nucleus of temporalities, a contemporaneous *trunk*: 'El tronco común del *tono* une a todos estos maromeros, como en el teatro javanés de sombras en el tronco de un plátano gigantesco vienen a clavarse, después de la chirriante representación, exhaustos de combates y volteretas, las figurillas caladas, filigranas en la hoja, que manejó un mismo titiritero, a que un mismo

demiurgo con turbante morado dió vela en el entierro y voz.' [Sarduy, 1991: 334]. Puppets (títeres), yes, comic strip characters who are physically moved by sentiment and who feel emotionally only through the physicality which gives them life and image.

5. There does not exist 'a history of Cuba'. What exists is a historical narration of the Cuban language or, better still, a narrative consideration of the *linguaging* [W. Mignolo, 1996] which for the sake of convenience we call 'Cuban' - and above all *outside* that which, with governmental anachronism, is still termed 'Cuba' today.¹⁰⁶ What does exist is a territorial elaboration - in Arenas, of course.

Narration, the invention of a plot which is, at the same time, a development of that *linguaging* which will be everyone's future language. 'Reinaldo Arenas nos devuelve con su obra a la conversación cubana, en que los interlocutores no toman la palabra sucesiva y pausadamente, para abundar o argumentar en un solo sentido y escuchar luego, asintiendo versallescamente; en nuestros *polílogos* *todo* el mundo interviene a la vez y con su propio ritmo, como en un frenético ritual de iniciación o una fiesta propiciatoria. El coro de conversadores cubanos invoca y apostrofa a los dioses siesteros, les exige que acudan, los llega a insultar por su pereza.' [Sarduy, 1991: 335].

¹⁰⁶ In order to locate this idea of 'linguaging', Walter Mignolo maintains, 'The challenges presented to language and literary scholarship by transnational and transimperial languaging processes are epistemologically and pedagogically serious, for they impinge on the very conception of the humanities as a site of research and teaching. This is particularly the case when reevaluations are viewed from the perspective of the European modernity. Such challenges alter the commonly held belief that linguistic and literary studies deal only with texts and literary authors, with cannon formation and transformation, and with aesthetic judgements and textual interpretations. Transnational languaging processes demand a theory and philosophy of human symbolic production predicated on languaging and transnational and transimperial categories, on a new philology, and on a pluritopic hermeneutics that will replace and displace "the" classical tradition in which philology and hermeneutics were housed in the modern period.' [W. Mignolo, 1996: 183].

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Appendix 1

Publications attributed to Reinaldo Arenas: 'Período cubano'

There must certainly exist other writings - unpublished, anonymous - which could be attributed to the author Reinaldo Arenas from this period, that is, up to the year 1980. Here appear only those of which I have had information to date.

In general an author's bibliographical narrations tend to be divided according to a particular generic classification (reviews, articles, fragments of books, etc.). It is my opinion that if on the one hand this is of service in the practical tasks of university and school teaching, on the other hand it removes from the bibliographical narration its natural continuity, the flow of the plot it bears. For, it must be said, every bibliographical narration also possesses a plot, not just an exercise in style, although the multiplicity of elements that compose it frequently make it difficult for us to see this with clarity.

To this end, a better composition must be found to express the time of the bibliographical account - the calendar will be used merely as a figure of order in this bibliography. Publications made outside Cuba will also be included here, although not dealt with *in extenso* as has already been mentioned, because I believe them to offer a more precise panorama of the bibliographical narration we attribute to the author bearing the name of Reinaldo Arenas.

Finally, it could be said that the exhaustive nature of this bibliographical narration could offer at first an impression of extreme diffusion of works by the author named Reinaldo Arenas, exactly the contrary of what had been conjectured. Nevertheless, if considered carefully, it can be recognized that these publications are extremely brief, of a marginal nature or, in the case of the novels published by an important publishing house, published in French, English or German, that is, outside the Spanish language market.¹⁰⁷

1965

1. "La punta del arcoiris. Soledad. La puesta del sol" in *Unión*, La Habana, IV, 1, enero-marzo, pp. 113-119. (Short stories).

1966

1. "El encadenamiento del fraile" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, V, 53, octubre-noviembre, p. 6. (Fragment later included in *El mundo alucinante*).
2. "Con los ojos cerrados" in *Unión*, La Habana, V, 4, octubre-diciembre, pp. 12-15. (A short story later to give its title to the book which appeared in 1972).

1967

1. *Celestino antes del alba*, UNEAC, La Habana. (Novel published at the beginning of May).
2. "Estancia en Pamplona" in *Revista Casa de las Américas*, La Habana, VII, 43, julio-agosto, pp. 87-90. (Fragment pertaining to the manuscript of *El mundo alucinante*).
3. "Celestino y yo" in *Unión*, La Habana, VI, 3, julio-setiembre, pp. 117-120. (Article read in the Biblioteca Nacional of La Habana as a result of the appearance of *Celestino antes del alba*).
4. "El hijo y la madre" in *Unión*, La Habana, VI, 4, diciembre, pp. 223-226. (A short story later to appear in *Con los ojos cerrados*).

¹⁰⁷ Further on I shall see how the publications of books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas in other languages affect the Spanish language market from the perspective of the auto/biographical story of Reinaldo Arenas as author.

1968

1. "Cien años de soledad en la ciudad de los espejismos" in *Revista Casa de las Américas*, La Habana, VIII, 48, mayo-junio, pp. 134-138. (Article read in the same year in the Universidad de La Habana).
2. "El páramo en llamas" in *El mundo*, La Habana, 7 de julio. (Article whose origin was a conference held at the University of Havana in 1967, presumably with regard to the recent appearance of *Celestino antes del alba* on the one hand, and, on the other, to the link Arenas perceived with Rulfo's work).
3. "Benítez entra en el juego" in *Unión*, La Habana, VII, 2, pp. 146-152. (Review of *Tute de Reyes* by Antonio Benítez Rojo).
4. "Magia y persecución en José Martí" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, VI, 66, julio-agosto, pp. 13-16. (Article later read at the University of Havana in 1969).
5. *Celestino antes del alba*, Editorial Brújula, Buenos Aires (appeared in November).
6. "Carta a revista Mundo Nuevo" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, VI, 66, julio-agosto, p. 16 (Note of repudiation addressed to Emir Rodríguez Monegal, at that point editor of the Parisian review *Mundo Nuevo*, as a result of the latter's publication of fragments of *Celestino antes del alba*. Eighteen years later, in 1986, Arenas was to reproduce the article [in *Necesidad de libertad*] clarifying that he had been obliged to write it and that, despite that, he had tried to imply this in the 1968 article [a more than debatable fact, certainly, given the piece's lack of ambiguity] [see L. Hasson, 1994]).
7. "Con los ojos cerrados" in M. Caballero Bonald [ed.]: *Narrativa cubana de la Revolución*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, pp. 249-255. (Short story).
8. *Le monde hallucinant*, Seuil, Paris. (Didier Coste's translation of *El mundo alucinante*).
9. "Bajo el signo de enero" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, VII, 67, setiembre-octubre, pp. 20. (Review of *Viento de enero* by José Lorenzo Fuentes).
10. "Literatura y revolución (Encuesta): Los Autores" in *Revista Casa de las Américas*, La Habana, IX, 51-52, noviembre-febrero (1969), pp. 119 y 164. (Questionnaire on Reinaldo Arenas).

1969

1. "A la sombra de la mata de almendras" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, VII, 69, enero, pp. 5-7. (Cuento).

2. "Tres mujeres y el amor" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, VII, 71, marzo, pp. 26-28. (Review of *Tres mujeres* by Roberto Musil).
3. "Cien años de soledad en la ciudad de los espejismos" in Pedro Simón [ed.]: *Recopilación de textos sobre Gabriel García Márquez*, Casa de las Américas, La Habana, pp. 148-155.
4. *El mundo alucinante. Una novela de aventuras*, Editorial Diógenes [first edition], México.
5. *El mundo alucinante*, Editorial Brújula, Buenos Aires.
6. "El páramo en llamas" in Antonio Benítez Rojo [ed.]: *Recopilación de textos sobre Juan Rulfo*, Casa de las Américas, La Habana, pp. 60-63.

1970

1. "Con los ojos abiertos" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, VIII, 81, marzo, pp. 10-11. (Review of *Abrir y cerrar de ojos* by Onelio Jorge Cardoso).
2. "Mi primer desfile" in Ambrosio Fornet [ed.]: *Cuentos de la revolución cubana*, Editorial Universitaria S.A., Santiago de Chile, pp. 54-57. (A short story later to be known as 'Comienza el desfile').
3. "Mariana entre los hombres" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, VIII, 86, pp. 28-29. (Review on the novel *Mariana* by David Buzzi).
4. *Celestino antes del alba*, Editorial Centroamericana, Buenos Aires.
5. *El mundo alucinante*, Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo, Buenos Aires.
6. "Tres sobre la mosca" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, 87, noviembre, p. 9. (A fragment later to be included in *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* or which already belonged to that manuscript).
7. "El reino de la imagen" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, VIII, 88, diciembre, pp. 23-26. (An article on Lezama Lima [having its genesis in the reading of *Paradiso* and of Lezama Lima's poems, according to Arenas himself; see Soto, 1990] whose origin was a conference at the University of Havana in homage to Lezama Lima himself in August 1969. Reinaldo Arenas never hid his preference for this article which he comments on in many interviews throughout his ten years of exile and which was reproduced at least twice: in *Mariel* [No.1] and in *Necesidad de libertad*).
8. "Granados en la casa sol" in *La Gaceta de Cuba*, La Habana, VIII, 88, diciembre, p. 30. (Review of *El viento en la casa sol* by Manuel Granados).
9. "El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas" in *Unión*, La Habana, IX: 4, diciembre, p. 39. (Source: Mendez Rodenas, 1990).

1971

1. "Discreta reverencia" en *Nuevas ciudades del recuerdo de José Cid* (Catálogo of Exhibition in Galería Hotel Habana Libre), 18 de diciembre. [cfr. R. Valero, 1991 y O. Ette, 1992].
2. *Hallucinations*, Jonathan Cape, London. (Gordon Brotherston's translation of *El mundo alucinante*).
3. *Hallucinations*, Harper & Row, New York. (Ditto).
4. *O Mondo Alucinante*, Publicações Don Quixote, Lisboa. (Paulo Octaviano Terra's translation of *El mundo alucinante*).

1972

1. *Celestino antes del alba*, Centro Editor de América Latina, Buenos Aires.
2. *Con los ojos cerrados*, Arca, Montevideo (appeared in September).

1973

1. *Le Puits*, Seuil, Paris. (Didier Coste's translation of *Celestino antes del alba*).
2. *El mundo alucinante. Una novela de aventuras*, Editorial Diógenes (second edition), México.

1975

1. *Le palais des très blanches mouffettes*, Seuil, Paris. (Translation from the Cuban original by Didier Coste).

1976

1. "Soneto" en AA. VV: *Jorge Camacho: La Danse de la mort*, Galerie de Seine 1976, p. 41. (Another version of this would appear in *Voluntad de vivir manifestándose*).
2. *Hallucinations*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth. (The same translation of *El mundo alucinante* that Gordon Brotherston did for the Jonathan Cape edition).

1977

1. *Der Palast der blütenweiben Stinktiere*, Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt. (Translation of the Cuban original by Monika López).
2. "Concerning Los Toribios Prison and the Chaining of the Friar" in E. Rodriguez Monegal y T. Colchie [edts.]: *The Borzoi Anthology of Latin American Literature*, Alfred Knopf, New York, tomo II, pp. 978-982. (Is a fragment of *El mundo alucinante*).

1978

1. *El mundo alucinante. Una novela de aventuras*, Editorial Diógenes [third edition], México.

1979

1. "Tres sonetos de Reinaldo Arenas" in Carlos Franqui [ed.]: *Jorge Camacho*, Ediciones Polígrafa, Barcelona, pp. 131-137. (With illustrations by Jorge Camacho himself. They would later appear in *Voluntad de vivir manifestándose*).

This particular description (one of the various possible descriptions) of the bibliographical narration attributed to Reinaldo Arenas attempts to show what was my hypothesis from the start:

- i. With the exception of the cases already considered in *Celestino antes del alba* and *El mundo alucinante*, there are practically no publications of Reinaldo Arenas in Spanish (cubano), even considering the Spanish-speaking market outside Cuba.
- ii. Until 1980 Reinaldo Arenas exists more as an auto/biographical story ('young Cuban author', 'little-known Cuban author', etc.) without a clear bibliographical narration - one can even speak of an 'author' in the paratextual sense of the term. It would also have to be said that the auto/biographical story is composed of commentaries mainly alien to the Spanish speaking market (I refer to the publication of books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas in other languages).
- iii. Despite this situation, and with the exceptions of *El portero*, *La loma del ángel* and *El color del verano*, which were written in their entirety outside Cuba, all the manuscripts of novels and stories were produced either partially or totally during this 'Cuban period'. Even a book apparently produced in its entirety between 1988 and 1989 [see Arenas, 1992], like *El*

color del verano, has passages written by Arenas during this 'Cuban period' (as an example of which one can mention the 'trabalenguas' which Arenas was turning over for at least fifteen years). In a restricted sense then, it could be said that *El portero* and *La loma del ángel* are the only two books 'of fiction' whose manuscripts were produced in their entirety after the 'Cuban period'.

iv. As is obvious, the majority of these publications occur outside Cuba and of these, as we know, Arenas had no news except to some extent where Seuil in Paris was concerned [cf. L. Hasson, 1992 and also Arenas, 1992] .

If I were to assess these publications strictly, without considering the auto/biographical story, I could even declare that <Reinaldo Arenas is the name of a second rate Cuban critic to whom are attributed two novels circulated underground>. Seen in the present historiographical dimension (March 3rd, 1997) such an expression seems incongruous which it is not if we avoid considering Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* in *historicist* terms, as has been the view of most literary critics to date, as has been shown.

What is paradoxical in all this is that a description such as the above of Reinaldo Arenas would undoubtedly adapt to the temporalization of 'Cuban literature' proposed by the journal Casa de las Américas in which Arenas during this period was not known as an 'author of fiction', apart from a certain inclusion of *El mundo alucinante* and *Celestino antes alba* within a so-called 'tropical surrealism' [Miranda, 1971]. As a reviewer of others' books, 'counterrevolutionary' or 'common delinquent' were the destinies Reinaldo Arenas had in the Cuban mass communication media until 1980 - and after that, with even more reason.

Appendix 2

Publications devoted to Reinaldo Arenas before 1980

Although the works devoted in their entirety to what we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* are sparse, the following description of the bibliographical narration is offered as one possible approximation, limited by the findings and by the material consulted. Since the earliest analyses, some characteristics can be observed in these works which in the future would practically acquire the status of constants:

- 1) the majority of the analyses are produced in university environments and with only two or three exceptions, these in their turn circulate amongst a minority which is the minority of academic studies devoted to so-called 'Latin American literature' (and 'Cuban' in particular);
- 2) many of them correspond to institutions or publications related to the United States and, in a very few cases to Latin American countries;
- 3) the analysis of Reinaldo Arenas carried out in Europe, excluding to some extent the Parisian literary world, is scant;
- 4) the bulk of the analyses deal solely with individual works or specific arguments of Arenas's *oeuvre*, especially with the absence of information and diffusion which, as has been seen, characterizes Reinaldo Arenas's writings in this first period.

What Reinaldo Arenas wrote in 1991 is interesting in this respect: 'No niego que existen muchas críticas valiosas sobre la obra areniana, pero la mayoría de las entradas a mi "Bibliografía crítica" son simples reseñas, espaldarazos o diatribas, más que verdaderos trabajos críticos. A Arenas, en muchas ocasiones, se le ataca por su posición política o preferencia sexual, o se le defiende por las mismas razones, olvidando los defensores o detractores lo que en realidad debe prevalecer, la crítica literaria fundamentada.' [Valero, 1991: 10-11]. Nevertheless, one of the books of most consequence in the 'bibliografía areniana' was written in this period - that is A. Borinsky, 1975.

Employing the same criterion as the previous bibliographical narration, I will not distinguish between types of work or analysis but solely, as a form of ordering, by the date when they were made public. The only distinction that strikes me as being relevant is that of differentiating between analyses totally or exclusively devoted to Reinaldo Arenas and analyses devoted partially to the author (mentions, remarks or comparisons) -this above all because in the period in question many 'histories', 'synopses' and encyclopaedic anthologies were published ('Cuban writers of the Revolution', for example, is a recurrent title clearly expressing this) which included *mentions* of new writers but whose practical scope- in terms of the publishing market - were nominal or nil. To this purpose I will refer to publications with 'full time dedication' (Dedicación de tiempo (del relato) completo) and 'partial dedication' (Dedicación de tiempo (del relato) parcial). The interviews are not included.

Finally, as in the previous appendix, I note that the exhaustive inventory attempts to offer a degree of precision regarding the bibliographical narration; in their majority these publications represent brief mentions,

reviews and only two or three relevant articles - always in the academic sphere. Perhaps an *ex post facto* confirmation of this situation can be found by going over the names of the analysts and demonstrating that , except for Emir Rodríguez Monegal, the rest rarely appear with two different works referred to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*.

a. 'Dedicación de tiempo completo'

1967

DIEGO, Eliseo

1967 "Sobre Celestino antes del alba" in *Revista Casa de las Américas*, La Habana, VII, 45, pp. 162-166.

1969

COUFFON, Claude

1969 "Reinaldo Arenas: un contestataire cubain" in *Le Monde*, Paris, marzo 22, p. 6.

1970

ARCOCHA, José M

1970 "El mundo alucinante de Reynaldo Arenas" in *AA*, [no indica lugar], I, 1, p. 69. (Source: O. Ette, 1992).

1971

FERNANDEZ GUERRA, Angel Luis

1971 "Recurrencias obsesivas y variantes alucinatorias en la obra de Reinaldo Arenas" in *Caravelle. Cahiers du Monde Hispanique et Luso-Brésilien*, Toulouse, 16, pp. 133-138.

LANE, Helen R.

1971 "Hallucinations" in *New York Times Book Review*, New York, 4, august 29, p. 20. (Review of Harper & Row's edition of *El mundo alucinante*).

ORTEGA, Julio

1971 "El mundo alucinante de Reinaldo Arenas" in *Revista de la Universidad de México*, México, XXVI, 4, pp. 25-27. (Reproducido asimismo en la revista *Imagen* [I, 18, octubre, 3, pp. 16-23] de Caracas).

SCHWARTZ, Alan

1971 "A Cuban Romance" in *Book World*, september 5, p. 8.
(Review of *Hallucinations*).

1972

WALLER, Claudia Joan

1972 "Reynaldo Arenas's *El mundo alucinante*: Aesthetic and Thematic Focal Points" in *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, Lexington, 19, pp. 41-50.

1973

[Without autor]

1973 "Allucinations" in *Review*, 8 (spring), p. 39. (Review of *El mundo alucinante*).

GORDON, Ambrose Jr. (Source: O. Ette, 1992).

1973 "Rippling Ribaldry and Pouncing Puns: The Two Lives of Fray Servando" in *Review*, VIII, 73 (spring), pp. 40-44.

ORTEGA, Julio

1973 "The Dazzling World of Friar Servando" in *Review*, VIII, spring, pp. 45-48. (Version of the article already published in 1971).

VESTERMAN, William

1973 "Going No Place with Arenas" in *Review*, [no indication of place], 8, spring, pp. 49-51.

1974

CABRERA INFANTE, Guillermo

1974 [Without title] in Julián Ríos [ed.]: *Cabrera Infante*, s/e, Madrid. (Source: O. Ette, 1992: 206).

COUFFON, Claude

1974 "Un <Poil de carotte> cubain? in *Le Monde*, Paris, febrero 8, p. 14.

1975

BORINSKY, Alicia

1975 "Re-escribir y escribir: Arenas, Menard, Borges, Cervantes, Fray Servando" in *Revista Iberoamericana*, Pittsburgh, XLI, 92-93, pp. 605-616.

[Without autor]

1975 "Arenas disparu?" in *Le Figaro*, París, [abril], p. 6.

CARTANO, Tony

1975 "Un réalisme investi de fantasmes" in *La quinzaine Littéraire*, Paris, [agosto], pp. 6-8.

GONZALEZ, Eduardo G

1975 "A razón de santo: Ultimos lances de Fray Servando" in *Revista Iberoamericana*, Pittsburgh, XLI, 92-92, pp. 593-603.

RINALDI, Angelo

1975 "Arenas un pamphlet-oratorio" in *L'Express*, Paris, 1252, 7-13 julio, pp. 53-54. (Review of *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas*).

1976

TOBIN, Patricia

1976 "The Author as Escape Artist" in *Review*, 19, pp. 86-87. (Review of *Hallucinations*).

1977

ZALDIVAR, Gladys

1977 "La metáfora de la historia in *El mundo alucinante*" en *Novelística cubana de los años 60*, Universal, Miami, pp. 41-71.

1978

BURI, Peter

1978 "Unschuld und Grausamkeit" in *Basler Zeitung*, Basilea, 193, junio 22, p. 35. (Review of *Der Palast der blütenweinben Stinktiere*).

FELL, Claude

1978 "Un neobarroco en desequilibrio: *El mundo alucinante* de Reinaldo Arenas" in *XVII Congreso del Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana* [Universidad Complutense de Madrid], Ediciones Cultura Hispánica del Centro Iberoamericano de Cooperación, Madrid, pp. 725-731.

NIEVES COLON, Myrna

1978 "Un acercamiento a *El mundo alucinante*" in *Lugar sin límite*, [s/l], 1, marzo-abril, pp. 40-45.

RODRIGUEZ ORTIZ, Oscar

1978 "*El mundo alucinante*: la leyenda negra como pretexto" in *Tiempo Real*, Caracas, 8, noviembre, pp. 81-88.

TAMARGO, Maribel

1978 "*Celestino antes del alba*: el lenguaje infantil y la violencia" in J. Cruz Mendizábal [ed.]: *Hispanic Literatures*, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana [Pa.], pp. 89-96.

WILLIAMS, Lorna

1978 "*El mundo alucinante*: la historia como posibilidad" in Mátyas Horányi [ed.]: *Actas del simposio internacional de estudios hispánicos* [18-

19 agosto], Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, pp. 501-504 . (Source: O. Ette, 1992).

1979

BOVI-GUERRA, Pedro

1978-79 “<El mundo alucinante>: Ecos de Orlando y otros ecos” in *Románica*, New York, 15, pp. 97-107.

JARA CUADRA, René

1979 “Aspectos de la intertextualidad en <El mundo alucinante>” in *Texto Crítico*, Xapala, V, 13, abril-junio, pp. 219-235.

b. 'Dedicación de tiempo parcial'

1966

OROVIO, Helio

1966 “Los desiertos y los permios” in *El Caimán barbudo*, La Habana, 8, noviembre, p. 18 (Brief interviews with the winners of the UNEAC Prizes, 1966).

1970

CASAL, Lourdes

1969-70 “La novela en Cuba 1959-1967: una introducción” in *Exilio*, New York, pp. 184-217. (Minor mention of *Celestino antes del alba*).

1971

MIRANDA, Julio

1971 *Nueva literatura cubana*, Taurus, Madrid. (Short mention: p. 98).

RICHARDS, David

1971 “Perversions and Horrors” in *The Washington Star*, Washington, septembre 26. (Source: O. Ette, 1992).

1972

CONTE, Rafael

1972 *Lenguaje y violencia. Una introducción a la nueva novela hispanoamericana*, Al-Borak, Madrid.

GOIC, Cedomil

1972 *Historia de la novela hispanoamericana*, Ediciones Universitarias de Valparaíso, Valparaíso [Chile]. (Short mention of Reinaldo Arenas).

SCHWARTZ, Kessel

1972 "Social and Aesthetic Concerns of the Twentieth Century Cuban Novel" in *Revista de estudios hispánicos*, 6, pp. 19-35.

RODRIGUEZ MONEGAL, Emir

1972 *El boom de la novela latinoamericana*, Editorial Tiempo Nuevo, Caracas. (Mention of Reinaldo Arenas on pp. 85, 94, 99-100).

1973

ORTEGA, Julio

1973 *Relato de la utopía: Notas sobre la narrativa cubana de la revolución*, La Gaya Ciencia, Barcelona. (Mentions of Reinaldo Arenas on pp. 13, 24, 25, 27, 217-226) (He also presents a version of the 1971 article which appeared in *Revista de la Universidad de México* and in *Imagen* [Caracas]).

1974

RODRIGUEZ MONEGAL, Emir

1974 *Narradores de esta América*, Alfa, Buenos Aires, tomo II. (There are various mentions of Arenas throughout the text).

1975

DEREDITA, John

1975 "Vanguardia, ideología, mito: en torno a la novelística reciente en Cuba" in *Revista Iberoamericana*, Pittsburgh, XLI, 92-93, pp. 617-625.

MENTON, Seymour

1975 *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution*, University of Texas Press, Austin. (Mentions about Arenas in pp. 43, 99-104, 173, 196, 274, 275).

RIVERA, Carlos

1975 "Tres escrituras: Cobra, *El mundo alucinante*, y Sobregondi retrocede" in *Románica*, 12, pp. 55-62.

RODRIGUEZ MONEGAL, Emir

1975 "La Nueva Novela vista desde Cuba" in *Revista Iberoamericana*, Pittsburgh, 92-93, pp. 647-662.

1977

LIBERTELLA, Héctor

1977 "Reynaldo Arenas: El mundo alucinante" in *Nueva escritura en Latinoamérica*, Monte Avila, Caracas, pp. 89-93.

MENDEZ Y SOTO, Ernesto

1977 *Panorama de la novela cubana de la Revolución (1959-70)*, Ediciones Universal, Miami. (Slight mentions of Arenas on pp. 205, 221-223, 240).

MIAJA DE GARCIA

1977 "El discurso histórico y el literario en *El mundo alucinante* de Reinaldo Arenas" in Blanca Mora Sanchez et al. [eds]: *Deslindes literarios*, El Colegio de México, México, pp. 107-124.

RODRIGUEZ MONEGAL, Emir

1977 [& Tomas Colchie: eds] *The Borzoi Anthology of Latin American Literature*, Knopf, New York, tomo II, pp. 977-978.

1978

BORINSKY, Alicia

1978 "Lógicas y prelógicas. Un juego de niños" in *Ver/Ser Visto (Notas para la poética)*, Antoni Bosch, Barcelona, pp. 78-83. (Source: O. Ette, 1992).

LEZAMA LIMA, José

1979 "Para Reinaldo Arenas" in *Fragmentos a su imán*, Lumen, Barcelona, pp. 46-7.

1979

ECHERRI, Vicente

1979a "Declaraciones de Vicente Echerri" in *Cambio 16*, Madrid, octubre 28, pp. 114-115. (Source: O. Ette, 1992).

1979b "Oleada de represión a intelectuales en Cuba" in *El Miami Herald*, Miami, noviembre 11, p. 9.

YAÑES, Pedro et al. [eds]

1979 *Perspectivas de nueva narrativa hispanoamericana*, Ediciones Puente, Rio Piedras [Puerto Rico]. (There are various minor mentions of Reinaldo Arenas).

KAPCIA, Antoni

1979 "La novela cubana a partir de 1959: revolución literaria o literatura revolucionaria?" in *Cuadernos Americanos*, [s/l], 225, pp. 33-45 (some mentions made of Reinaldo Arenas).

This description of the bibliographical narration of the writings devoted in their majority to *El mundo alucinante* - and to a lesser extent to *Celestino antes del alba* - attempts to demonstrate the scope of the name Reinaldo Arenas as author. That is, it tries to give a direction to the question 'who is

Reinaldo Arenas?' made since before 1980. The answer, as has already been said, is that such a name exists between Reinaldo Arenas (as author) and *El mundo alucinante* (as novel), which will have consequences on the composition and consideration of that which we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. This is particularly the case after 1980, since, as I have already shown, from a historiographical perspective only one *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas can be spoken about since the publication of R. Valero's book [1991].

And it is interesting to note that in none of these publications is reference made to the 'pentagon' or, at least, to the interpretative importance of underlining a sequence between various novels (the first writing publicly disseminated in which reference is made to it is in Arenas's interview with Santí [1980], in June 1980, when Arenas had already produced the majority of his manuscripts and proposed a reading of them, even though they had not yet been published: from his paratextual descriptions he was already making them circulate as *books to come*).

Finally, this description also attempts to reinforce the conjecture expressed in the previous appendix, that is, to attempt to expound the specific relationship between manuscripts and publications on which the whole of the present work turns.

Appendix 3

Desencuentros en una isla imaginaria

Existe un llamado *deporte nacional* en algunos países de la mal llamada “latinoamérica” que consiste en “contar el cuento a los europeos”, ello sucede paradójicamente entre un grupo de ex habitantes de la mentada región que viven hoy día en los territorios de la Comunidad Económica Europea o frecuentan con asombrosa asiduidad a la misma. La idea literaria que permite a estos escribas vender libros periodísticos como “ficción” es justamente de lo que he tratado de ocuparme -aunque no dicho abiertamente- en el artículo que aquí se reproduce.

En realidad, de lo que se trataba, imaginé, no era sólo de polemizar con una interpretación del autor Reinaldo Arenas -aparecida en la revista ibérica titulada *Encuentro de la cultura cubana*- sino con una idea de *lo literario* que predomina en el mercado editorial hispanoamericano. *Encuentro de la cultura cubana* es, creo, un claro ejemplo de esta idea de *lo literario* para europeos (y para nativos desde europa) y a la cual el presente escrito trata de abocarse por intermedio de una crítica a un artículo acerca del autor Reinaldo Arenas aparecido en dicha revista.

El escrito con ánimo fue inicialmente dirigido al editor de la mencionada revista pero, como era de esperarse, nunca fue publicado.

Reinaldo Arenas, materia inmediata de este debate, escribió alguna vez: “Una de las cosas más lamentables de las tiranías es que todo lo toman en

serie y hacen desaparecer el sentido de humor. Históricamente Cuba había escapado siempre de la realidad gracias a la sátira y la burla. Sin embargo, con Fidel Castro, el sentido del humor fue desapareciendo hasta quedar prohibido; con eso el pueblo cubano perdió una de sus pocas posibilidades de supervivencia; al quitarle la risa le quitaron al pueblo el más profundo sentido de las cosas. Sí, las dictaduras son púdicas, engoladas y, absolutamente, aburridas.” [Arenas, 1992: 261-2].

En éste espíritu finalmente fue escrito este escrito que hoy presento como <Carta abierta a *Encuentro de la cultura cubana*> ya que, antes en *El Caimán Barbudo* y hoy en la mentada revista madrileña, esta falta de *grazia* se hace presente disfrazada de entelequia académica o de logrado género novelesco.

Caído en el campo de la desgracia

“Aunque ningún crítico
haya reparado en ello (la función de los
críticos es no advertir siquiera lo
evidente)...”

Reinaldo Arenas, 1970.

1. Las prisiones de Fabio Murrieta

En el número correspondiente al otoño de 1996 de *Encuentro de la cultura cubana* apareció un artículo dedicado a Reinaldo Arenas del que quisiera ocuparme brevemente.

El artículo en cuestión sin duda es producto del desarrollo historiográfico que ha adquirido la obra de Reinaldo Arenas y que, según creo, el mismo Arenas contribuyó en gran medida a elaborar (para una introducción a dicho desarrollo puede consultarse O. Ette, 1992). Sin este *espesor bibliográfico* nadie en La Habana se vería en la necesidad de ocuparse de un autor llamado Reinaldo Arenas -tal como, por otra parte, sucedió por mucho tiempo (véase al respecto el instructivo “Epílogo” de C. Guzmán a *La Vieja Rosa* [1980]). En este sentido entonces es que escribo: me interesa menos el autor del mentado artículo que las concepciones literarias (ignoro las otras) allí sugeridas, puestas y justificadas.

2. Esa película yo ya la ví o *Alicia en el Pueblo de las Maravillas*

En primer lugar veo toda una serie de simplificaciones que, como poco, me parecen avezadas y creo dan el tono galimático y general sobre el que este artículo se inscribe (y escribe).

Hablar, por ejemplo, de “un límite físico en la experiencia del conocimiento” [p. 131] para referirse a un autor que fue perseguido políticamente, encarcelado y que finalmente escapó al exilio me parece, si no se agrega otra argumentación que vagas y trilladas apelaciones de “literatura universal”,¹⁰⁸ por lo menos arriesgado. Riesgo que pasa, poco más adelante, a la consagración del desatino libresco: “...todo lo cual nos conduce a pensar que en el fondo del novelista está, básicamente, el autor de esos cuentos, en el sentido más técnico (sic) de la palabra, agrupados en *Termina el desfile*.” [p. 134]. Si consideramos que bajo el nombre de Reinaldo Arenas hay por lo menos 24 libros publicados, una cantidad aún no establecida de artículos periodísticos, un archivo con manuscritos (algunos de los cuales aun sin publicar) en la Biblioteca Firestone de la Princeton University, al menos cinco videos y tres filmes que lo tienen como protagonista, así como también una gran cantidad de cartas, borradores y textos breves dispersos por los Estados Unidos y Europa, digo, si éste es el panorama, tal afirmación parece cuanto menos discutible.

“La prisión -sostiene el articulista- es el símbolo generalizado e histórico del ejercicio del poder, y en la circunstancia nacional de las novelas de Arenas, un espacio que frena e interroga los conceptos de emancipación y transformación mediante la presencia de los costados que hacen frágil y vulnerable la rigidez de todo sistema humano.” [p. 137-138]. Respecto de una afirmación como ésta se podrían escribir varios tratados, sin embargo

¹⁰⁸ “Para muchos escritores (Miguel de Cervantes, Fiodor Dostoievski, el Marqués de Sade, Óscar Wilde, Carlos Montenegro, et al), el haber padecido la fría humedad de una celda, lejos de entorpecer sus labores creativas, incidió en el ámbito estético verificándose en la constitución de un signo que se trasladaba de lo personal a lo cultural.” [p. 132] Bondades de la prisión [en Cuba], si las hay.

sería bueno por el momento disentir considerando que la prisión no es un símbolo sino un medio burocrático y administrativo de gobierno [véase *Antes que anochezca*, 203 y ss]. Es conocida la definición de Max Weber acerca del Estado -anticipando evidencias tales como el Holocausto y la dictadura argentina de Videla, Massera y Cia, por mencionar dos ejemplos genéricos- como “monopolio legítimo de la fuerza”: la prisión, cuando no la muerte, es quien garantiza la ausencia de toda alternativa de distinción, de cualquier ejercicio de la diferencia. ¿Cuál es la “circunstancia nacional de las novelas de Arenas”? En la obra de Reinaldo Arenas no hay nación sino noción, como dice Cabrera Infante [1992]. Los trabajos de R. Arenas no se refieren, tan simplemente, al Estado y el autoritarismo como a “un espacio que frena e interroga los conceptos de emancipación y transformación” [p. 137-138] sino, por el contrario, como a un sistema político que detiene e interroga personas cuyo encarcelamiento y prisión posterior [Fray Servando Teresa de Mier o Reinaldo Arenas, poco importa] no pueden impedir ni mucho menos controlar narraciones, libros y mercados editoriales -como fue intención (tan ilusoria como constante) de la dictadura militar que gobierna Cuba en la ya farmacéutica existencia del hijo de inmigrantes llamado Fidel Castro. Creo, por último, que en esta frase, como en muchas otras del artículo, es más importante para el autor lo que no se quiere decir que lo que se dice haciendo referencia a Reinaldo Arenas. Vaya uno a saber por qué.

Como para que se descubra de donde son los cantantes, el articulista agrega: “Entre prisiones voluntarias también queda el mundo poético del creador.” [p. 137]. Reinaldo Arenas ya sugirió, refiriéndose a Fray Servando, que de palabras que simplifican está hecho el camino al Morro habanero.

3. Bibliografías

Reinaldo Arenas no presenta *Celestino antes del alba* al concurso de la UNEAC en 1965, como el articulista sostiene, sino en 1964 [L. Hasson, 1992]. Novela que obtiene la primera mención, y no el primer premio, porque parece que José Antonio Portuondo y Alejo Carpentier se opusieron a ello de modo irreversible diciendo “que cómo era posible que se fuera a premiar una novela que no tenía nada que ver con lo político, y que el primer premio tenía que ser un premio donde destacara la cosa heroica, la política de la revolución cubana...” [L. Hasson, 1992]. Todavía sigo buscando sin éxito, en bibliotecas europeas, al menos un ejemplar de *Vivir en Candonga* que, me dicen, fue la novela de Carpentier y Portuondo escrita por un tal Ezequiel Vieta.

Refiriéndose a esta mención, el articulista dice que “se iniciaba para la literatura cubana la historia de la posible justeza de las (auto)valoraciones en torno a la obra de este escritor.” [p. 133]. No sé si he entendido del todo esta frase, pero de lo que no queda dudas es de que Reinaldo Arenas no ganó una mención sino que le quitaron el primer premio y la prueba incontestable de ello es no sólo el testimonio de Virgilio Piñera (asimismo jurado) sino también que ningún otro libro suyo ha visto la luz del sol en Cuba desde entonces. Si alguna historia menor allí empezaba es sin duda la que corresponde a una de las censuras literarias más grotescas y fascinantes de que tenga memoria.

El articulista habla luego de una supuesta “inconformidad (¿de Arenas?: no sé si he entendido bien) con el premio desierto del segundo certamen convocado por la UNEAC, esta vez en 1966, donde *El mundo alucinante* lograra una discreta mención honorífica...” [p. 133] Dejemos, en primer lugar, que el mismo R. Arenas aclare algunos puntos: “...en el año 65 volví a presentar una novela en la UNEAC y dije: bueno, si no gané antes gano en éste; y la novela que presenté entonces era *El mundo alucinante*. [...] Como

no había ninguna novela que merecía el premio, declararon el premio desierto, y a la novela hasta le dieron la primera mención, y más nada.” [L. Hasson, 1992] No hubo “discreta mención honorífica” sino la misma primera mención que recibiera, un año antes, *Celestino antes del alba*. Respecto del año del concurso en que se presentó *El mundo alucinante* el mismo Arenas, con los ojos errados, a veces dice que fue 1965 [L. Hasson, 1992] y otras que 1966 [Arenas, 1992]. Sin embargo, como bien sostiene el articulista, parece haber un acuerdo por afirmar que fue 1966 [L. Hasson, 1994].

“Dos años después [se refiere a 1971] -continúa el articulista- de insistir por la vía de este género [sic], el volumen de cuentos *Con los ojos cerrados* también alcanzaba mención en el evento citado.” [p. 133] *Con los ojos cerrados* fue presentado al Concurso de Casa de las Américas no a la UNEAC, entre cuyos jurados figuraban Jorge Edwards y el profesor de universidades estadounidenses Angel Rama. La colección de cuentos no obtuvo premio alguno. “En aquel momento -sostiene Reinaldo Arenas- me dice Angel Rama: ‘Dame el libro’ -y lo sacó y lo publicó en una editorial que se llamaba Arca [se refiere a la edición que apareciera en septiembre de 1972]. Y yo nunca me enteré. Dice Angel Rama que él me mandó los libros a Cuba; si los mandó jamás los recibí, cosa que era normal.” [L. Hasson, 1992].

Leer, a menudo, es una tarea difícil pues, como bien describe Arenas en *Antes que anochezca*, hace falta no sólo tiempo sino además libros. Algo de esto también debe saber el articulista cuando situando a la editorial Dador en Barcelona da claramente a entender que jamás tuvo entre sus manos esa edición de *La Loma del Angel* [Málaga, 1989] que utiliza y cita (de otra cita, de otro libro, claro).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ También deberíamos considerar -al pié de página, claro- que los tipógrafos de *Encuentro de la cultura cubana* cometen errores y hacen a los lectores pensar mal de los articulistas.

Por último, *last but not least*, me dicen que, contrariamente a lo expresado en el artículo, Reinaldo Arenas no nació en Holguín sino en un caserío entre Gibara y Holguín que algunos bautizan como Aguas Claras y otros como nada.

4. Fe fue, dice el son, de lo mismo

Otro elemento fundamental de esta perspectiva acerca de los trabajos literarios de Reinaldo Arenas es el eufemismo. Y un eufemismo se conoce como una expresión con que se sustituye a otra “considerada violenta, grosera o procaz”. La utilidad retórica de esta figura es sin duda inapreciable pues ofrece una justificación que no tiene oposición posible: la *conveniencia* de una expresión en favor de otra. Veamos algunos ejemplos.

Hablar de un “habría que hablar de una lamentable resistencia que ha pretendido mantenerse ajena a los rumbos de la novelística hispanoamericana contemporánea” [p. 132] para referirse a la censura de Estado que gobierna los destinos librescos de Cuba desde hace ya tiempo, parece poco menos que exagerado -exageradamente eufemístico diríamos, cuyas distorsiones no tienen fin, final digo. Y sobre este fin deberíamos decir que “la novelística hispanoamericana contemporánea” fue -y sigue siendo- un invento de profesores como Angel Rama para ganarse la vida y algunos premios y que Arenas allí, como decía Severo Sarduy, no toca o toca de ido. Por el mismo camino aparece un “creo importante destacar la oposición crítica que hasta finales de los años ochenta se negó a aceptar en nuestra historia literaria (...) la inclusión plena de la obra ejecutada por escritores en el exilio...” [p. 133]. ¡Hachas! ¡Hachas! ¡Hachas!, seguramente diría Arenas (y un ¡recórcholis!, agregaría el Che desde cielo boliviano pero en argentino) para nombrar el primer caso -en la historia de los tiempos modernos- de un Estado caribeño que es autoridad, gobierno y oposición todo a un tiempo y en funciones.

Imaginemos ahora, por un momento, la historia de un personaje de novela al que le roban escritos de su casa -sea la policía porque los quiere, sea los vecinos o parientes porque quieren el favor que promete la policía por semejante alcahuetería- y entonces, este personaje, para evitar tal eventualidad debe estar moviéndolos de un lado a otro y escondiéndolos en lugares insólitos, con lo cual es normal que más de uno se pierda. Si a un personaje le sucediera todo ello y estuviésemos narrando su historia, ¿describiríamos la situación de los manuscritos respecto del personaje con palabras tales como “usurpación” o “extravío”? El Alejo Carpentier que Arenas caracteriza lo haría [A. Pagni, 1992], pero no el propio Reinaldo Arenas que entendía estos eufemismos como elementos de una “estética barroca oficial” [Santí, 1986 y A. Pagni, 1992].

El eufemismo tiene también una última finalidad virtuosa que consiste en asumir como conclusiones indeclinables lo que nunca fue nombrado. Los lectores de pruebas y los censores saben de estas entre líneas en donde las *presupposizioni*, como les llama Umberto Eco [1979], del *lector in fabula* presente en cada narración, no están libradas a azar de lectura o imaginación alguna sino a las disposiciones del zar que decide quién será el asesino y cuándo y cómo le vamos a descubrir -primero el veredicto, después el juicio, dice respecto de este ejercicio de estilo el Infante Difunto.¹¹⁰ Por eso no asombra que el policial género sea una actual recurrencia habanera. “Ahora hay en Cuba -decía Arenas en La Habana, en 1979 *circa*- una onda de novelas policiales. Parece que eso deja algún dinerito.” [C. Guzmán, 1980].

¹¹⁰ Quizás en La Habana se haya realizado ese caso de *fabulae chiuse*, considerado imposible por Umberto Eco [1979, 120], donde todas las imaginables alternativas de lectura se hallan consideradas (y controladas) en la misma concepción del relato. Es decir, no hay hipótesis ni conjeturas sino certezas que son conclusiones sobre el *costrutto culturale* que es el mundo que circunda el libro (y nos circunda, claro): estamos frente al manual militar (de una oficial historiografía), no frente a lo que por convención solemos llamar ficción.

Consagración de la primavera de esta última finalidad del fin de los eufemismos es sin duda -para un artículo que, digamos, podría llamarse “Las prisiones de Reinaldo Arenas”- el siguiente párrafo: “La celda que se erige entre una realidad histórica y los deseos de un hombre, circunfiere las posibilidades y anticipa las marcas del destino que se espera.” [p. 138]. Ya decía yo que en La Habana hay relatos policiales extraños, al punto que un personaje llamado Realidad Histórica (todavía) gobierna la ciudad y, como si fuera poco, ahora además encarcela gente que se desencontró con el destino. Con otro ahora, ahora, entiendo por qué tantos intelectuales, escritores y profesores que visitan La Habana desde hace más de veinte años siempre se llevan sus propios libros (aunque no lo digan): en La Habana hasta las novelas policiales tienen un final previsto en donde el Héroe (siempre culpable), en las puertas ya de su celda, habitualmente se pregunta con un aire metafísico y aburrido: “En qué medida favorecemos a construirla (a la celda, claro) es algo que debemos preguntarnos.” [p. 138]. La primera persona es plural, sin duda, pero en la celda de novela (de Arenas) sólo entra uno (con sus deseos no siempre). Qué estilo literario más raro, ¿no?. Me dicen mis amigos cubanos es el tropismo barroco del trópico, un real maravilloso donde ella (Arenas, claro) miraba el mar desde el Morro y cantaba boleros.

5. Arenas y vientos desde La Habana

El siguiente aspecto que nos ocupa, en estas generalísimas concepciones que estamos tratando de describir como partes de una misma aproximación literaria, es el de la *incomprensión* -consecuencia posible, creemos, de un prolongado uso de ese barroco oficial del que hablaba Arenas.

Hay un *no se entiende* presente a lo largo de toda la lectura del artículo que puede entenderse -me dicen agitados mis cubanos amigos- como ocultamiento, como *travestimiento* -y mueven apurados las manos cuando

pronuncian esta palabra. Por ejemplo, les pregunto, qué querría decir “asumir la marginalidad para Reinaldo Arenas se convierte en un proceso de asimilación y proyección, cuya fe en la libertad radica en las posibilidades de aprehender las esencias de lo vital desde una perspectiva socioculturalmente sometida...” [p. 134]. Qué vaina, chico, qué vaina... - dicen, mientras me quedo esperando una segunda intervención que nunca llega. Vuelvo al ataque y cambio el frente para no enrarecer “la atmósfera dialéctica” como uno de ellos sigue repitiendo desde su días habaneros - aunque él dice eso “fue allá lejos y hace tiempo”. Qué me dicen, digo, de ésta: “Arenas se interesa en esbozar, más que una poética definida por contornos personales, un modo poético con una serie de potencialidades que se descompactan a lo largo de la obra, hasta el momento en que presumiblemente adquieren el dominio del texto, ya sea por naturaleza, o sencillamente porque estén programados para escapar al control del autor.” [p. 134]. Alzo la vista hacia mis amigos y veo que ya están en la cocina con “un algo tenemos que comer, chico”. Uno de ellos se acerca y dice “ponete algo de música, *che*”, mientras del bolso saca un libro que me alcanza al mismo tiempo que agrega un “necesitas una cura, te vas a enfermar”. ¿Debo decir que el libro era un biografía de Antonio Machín?

Idos mis cubanos amigos vuelvo sobre la ilegibilidad final de frases tales como: “Las palabras importarán sólo en tanto remedio obligado y falso y casi ínfimamente en su resonancia estética.” [p. 135]. El *no se entiende*, aun entendido como juego de escondidas, no va muy lejos en donde Arenas aparece como un convidado (con cara) de piedra.

De este *no se entiende* también vienen expresiones sueltas tales como: “alma humana” [p. 131], “artista” [p. 131], “la recuperación y el homenaje” [p. 132], “referente real” [p. 133], “universo poético” [p. 134] -que bien podrían estar en un artículo de *Juventud Rebelde*, en una Noticia Histórica del *Granma* o en un comentario policial del *Miami Herald*. Sin despreciar

algunas manifestaciones más personales como “connotación particularizadora” [p. 135], “lo indefectible” [p. 135] y la famosa “circunstancia nacional” [p. 137] entre otras.

Cuando de este *no se entiende* surgen conclusiones terminantes aparece el *choteo*, el humor, una cierta comicidad que Arenas hubiera realmente apreciado: “Sería útil precisar, sin embargo, que no hay, a pesar de lo dicho, esa finitud que suele acompañar a los autores que se agotan en una ópera prima.” [p. 134]. Ejemplo éste supremo pero que tiene compañía de no poco: “En Arenas, la referencia a las prisiones está impuesta por su propio existir.” [p. 137] Guajiro extraño este travieso Reinaldo Arenas que se las anda buscando, ¿no?. Hay y vienen otras pero no quiero preocupar a nadie prolongando estas declaraciones del sentido (del humor) cubano y actual.

El *no se entiende* sigue, entonces, ahí. Y proviene -casi estoy convencido- de una (con)fusión general. Relato biográfico, *plot* de novelas, apreciaciones de literatura universal, citas de “especialistas” y de bibliografía universitaria, sin olvidar los fragmentos extraídos de trabajos de Reinaldo Arenas (o, como vimos, de otros que los reproducen): ensalada *a la Retamar*.

El *no se entiende*, en definitiva, visto con humor arenoso, podría sintetizarse con el ya estelar verso: “con qué prudencia todo dictador condena a muerte a quien ose manejar la espumadera” [*Leprosorio*, 58].

Está por inventarse sin duda el Alejo Carpentier -el de Arenas, el que escribía un barroco real, maravilloso y oficial para un país cuyo horizonte era un reino de este mundo con campos de detención, con esquemas de trabajo obligatorio y que como imagen posible sólo existía en los números de la zafra anual y en los de la Revista Casa de las Américas (éstos últimos menos numerosos pero más vistos). Está por inventarse, decía, el Alejo Historiográfico Carpentier de eso que se llama comúnmente “*paper* universitario” y veo en este artículo grandes promesas para el futuro. Quizás

por ello el articulista no titubea en afirmar: “El ensayo que *definitivamente* recupere su importancia [la de Arenas] en la literatura cubana *siempre* estará por hacer [sic].” [p. 138].

6. Fucol en los meandros del Vedado

Como en el artículo sobre Reinaldo Arenas se usa la palabra “poder” y también la de “prisión” alguien sin duda alguna ha de haber sugerido que se pusiera por allí el nombre de un tal Michel Foucault -que para colmo de posibles alegorías, la contratapa y otros alrededores de la edición mexicana de Siglo Veintiuno Editores, dicen que, además de filósofo, era homosexual, que “falleció de SIDA” y que la versión original de “Vigilar y castigar” se publicó en París en 1975.

“La prisión, como distanciamiento impuesto, ha asumido a lo largo de la historia -sostiene el articulista- diversas implicaciones epistemológicas formales y significativas, (aquí va numerito de la cita de Foucault) entre ellas la oposición fijada entre las modalidades del castigo, que exige reducción, y el anhelo de reafirmación vital que en ese instante dicta estallido y profusión.” [p. 132]. Que esta frase sea el cuarto párrafo de un artículo ya me parece asombroso, que este artículo además diga ocuparse de Reinaldo Arenas ya es preocupante.

Para buscarle un nombre a esto, para nombrar de algún modo apariciones como estas, recurro a mis cubanos amigos que, cuando en medio de una comida o una conversación trato de citar las dos o tres cosas que me acuerdo de memoria de Lezama, indefectiblemente uno de ellos -se turnan con religiosidad en sus aclaraciones regionales- me dice “cita fuera de ritmo” y entonces me mareo entre imágenes de Benny Moré y meandros de *Paradiso*. Es otra vez el fantasma del *no se entiende*.

Se me ocurre entonces tomar las cosas por otro lado y me digo que si a la segunda página -de un artículo dedicado al hispanohablante confeso

Reinaldo Arenas- ya aterriza una mención a *Surveiller et punir*, esto es para que nos queden en claro algunas cosas: (1) que estamos en presencia de un ilustrado, (2) que algo leyó sobre el tema (de las prisiones cubanas) y (3) que nos sugiere asociemos -como lectores- su artículo al libro de Foucault (poco importa si esta sociedad está o será demostrada) que es filósofo y francés.

Si uno se atiene, por ejemplo, a la interpretación que hace Gilles Deleuze [1986 y 1990] de M. Foucault, la <sociedad de control> es el argumento dominante en la idea de poder que se desarrolla en *Surveiller et punir* y el panóptico de Jeremy Bentham su figura rectora. La proposición más interesante, sin embargo, y que el mismo G. Deleuze remarca, es la idea de que *un poder no es sólo represivo sino también productivo*. En otras palabras: precisamente lo opuesto del “exige reducción” y el “decretar restricciones es promulgar el poder” [p. 132] que menciona el articulista. La idea de poder que Foucault describe en *Surveiller et punir* es la de un espacio -o una *visión*, según otras interpretaciones- que controla produciendo no menoscabando o inhibiendo. Y algo de esto el articulista debería haber entendido ocupándose de un escritor que sólo publicó en Cuba una remota novela hace 30 años y cuyos libros todavía, que yo sepa, no han llegado a ninguna librería de La Habana.

Algo hay que decir es la expresión justa para esta idea que podemos sin duda atribuir a Michel Foucault. Pero más interesante aún, como el mismo filósofo sugiere, es que esta obligación viene de una autoridad (obvio) que es más bien un *espacio* (que también podría nombrarse como <punto de vista>) y que no necesariamente tiene nombre propio alguno. Sucede en muchos casos, como en el del mismo Arenas según propusimos al inicio, que quien *manda* es la dimensión espacial de una evidencia (un relato también al fin y al cabo). El *algo hay que decir* a veces no proviene de una propia decisión sino de esta dimensión efectiva que, de manera más específica, antes llamamos <espesor bibliográfico>. Dicho en cubano:

Arenas hace hablar en La Habana de las Letras Cubanas -aunque muchos no quieran y aunque nadie (o muy pocos) conozca sus libros, artículos y otros, pero sí sus biográficos chismes que, como se sabe, son el son de la isla.

Para concluir este otro aspecto de la perspectiva literaria que nos ocupa, digamos que en principio parecer (cita de *Surveiller et punir*) y ser (bien) parecido (mostrar la sociedad no homosexual entre Arenas, Foucault [y el articulista]) son dos cuestiones separadas que, cuando un artículo es convincente, desaparece por arte de la lectura. Y hablando de lecturas, digamos que leer el libro de Michel Foucault, lo que se dice leer, nadie discute que el articulista no lo haya hecho. Pero, como dicen mis todavía cubanos amigos, “también se puede leer de noche y con la luz apagada.” “Sobre todo ahora que La Habana vive a los apagones”, agrega otro.

7. Caídos en el campo, del mapa y en las Letras

Finalmente, hay que decir que este pretendido control -silencioso y habanero- sobre la historiografía de Reinaldo Arenas, a partir del *algo hay que decir* y desde las aspiraciones de futuros ensayistas definitivos, es una clara muestra de la creencia naif que alguna gente todavía tiene acerca del tiempo y los sucesos -para no hablar ya de ese atrofiado dúo facultativo - artículo determinante neutro/adjetivo calificativo- reconocido las más de las veces como *lo literario*. Es el <espesor historiográfico> de la obra de Reinaldo Arenas quien *hace hablar* a las Letras Cubanas de La Habana y son ellas quienes deberán obtener un acuerdo con ese relato bibliográfico -y no al revés, como el articulista pretende no sugerir sugiriendo. Las Letras Cubanas de La Habana necesitan del relato bibliográfico que la obra de Reinaldo Arenas ofrece, mientras que ningún profesor universitario, periodista, escritor o exiliado (adjetivado como gusten) que se ocupe de Reinaldo Arenas necesita de ellas (de la Letras), del viaje a La Habana o de

la entrevista con el amigo del amigo que alguna vez vio a Reinaldo Arenas caminando por el Vedado o en la heladería Coppelia. “Recuérdales”, me decía uno de mis cubanos amigos mientras tecleaba este artículo en mi casa, “que la obra de Reinaldo Arenas no está en Cuba sino fuera de ella. A lo mejor lo entienden.”

Sin duda, desde la fuga de Arenas en 1980, el segundo gran evento respecto de su obra será cuando se den a conocer publicamente los *files* que la dictadura militar que gobierna Cuba ha acumulado a lo largo de treinta años -cartas secuestradas, manuscritos, libros y otras yerbas. Pero, aun así, ese futuro promisorio no alcanza para fabricar la *efectividad* que se está buscando para hablar de alguien cuyos libros y pertenencias, en su gran mayoría, giran y circulan fuera de Cuba.

¿Qué otra cosa que el patetismo -un carnaval picaresco y arenoso- puede resultar de afirmaciones (que carecen de esta pretendida efectividad bibliográfica) tales como: “Metadiscurso que partiendo del nivel de elaboración en el plano narrativo, como constante ideológica de una totalidad, habría que considerar más seriamente (sic) en tanto relativa novedad de incidencia temática y formal de sus obras finales (*El color del verano* y *Antes que anochezca*), más allá de ese tono controvertido y ocasional que algunos prefieren llamar ‘delirios’ y otros ‘egocentrismos’, y que se amplifica considerablemente si lo valoramos en un contexto donde el humor subvierte toda ética, llegando finalmente a un decoroso y muy particular trabajo de ficcionalización del testimonio, haciendo del referente real, mediante la caricatura, un fantasma literario.” [p. 133]? ¿Quiénes son los algunos? ¿Qué han escrito sobre Arenas? ¿Dónde lo han publicado? ¿Cuáles son sus argumentos? ¿Por qué habrían de interesarnos? Y podría seguir con este tipo de preguntas. Por eso ya no me extraña (sí en la primera lectura) que el articulista habanero llame en causa a “diversos especialistas” para hablar de algo que bien debería conocer [mejor incluso] como es el

circuito de los libros que andan a escondidas en La Habana de hoy día (como en la de los otros días de Arenas) y cuando sostiene que “sorteando las prohibiciones, sus libros han llegado un poco como ya una vez lo hizo el *Don Quijote* a América.” [132]. Por eso también la aparición de un *lenguaje de Estado* no resulta una sorpresa sino una confirmación: “Condenado [Arenas] en 1974 a dos años de privación de libertad, en un proceso entre cuyas agravantes se encontraba el haber publicado sus textos en el extranjero sin permisos oficiales....” [136].

Las simplificaciones donde relato biográfico, análisis bibliográfico y comentario de las *plot* de algunas novelas se confundían y confundían, concluyeron, por una parte, en una serie de imprecisiones (necesarias y útiles sin duda al articulista) y, por otra, en un conjunto eufémico que pretende hacer hablar algunos trabajos de Arenas pero que acaba encerrado en “la celda que [él mismo] se erige.” [p. 138]. Las palabras, entonces, ya no hablan de Arenas sino del articulista, de las Letras Cubanas y de La Habana actual. Para evitarlo, el articulista, ejerce un *no se entiende* que en vez de ayudar todavía empeora: el llamado en causa de Michel Foucault se convierte en el *exemplum* de lo que se trataba de esconder no diciendo, es decir, que Reinaldo Arenas se ha convertido en algo *visible y evidente*, que ya no se puede ocultar y que algo hay que decir. Cómo, cuándo y dónde eso pase, eso sí, queda librado a cada articulista de las Letras Cubanas y, como se sabe desde *El mundo alucinante*, “a la disponibilidad del papel” que, como puede observarse viendo el lugar de publicación del artículo, sigue siendo escasa.

El último círculo havernero de estas concepciones se inscribe en la tradición que ya comentamos Arenas atribuía al real embajador maravilloso Alejo Carpentier: vida y literatura se confunden para confundir a muchos. “La vida de Reinaldo Arenas transcurrió -sostiene el articulista- en una relación de entrega literaria y vital.” [p.138]: romanticismo gubernamental

que desde *La venas abiertas de América Latina* -y desde Siglo Veintiuno Editores que ya pasó la 35ª edición del engendro- dirige toda incorporación narrativa en términos de calendario revolucionario, cronología de Casa de las Américas o temporalización de ese invento universitario que llaman Latinoamérica. Por el contrario, si algo caracteriza la originalidad de Reinaldo Arenas es haber roto con esta larga tradición (¿mafia hagiográfica podemos decir?) que concebía la existencia biológica y el trabajo literario como de una misma duración y funciones.¹¹¹ “Mira, yo te voy a decir -decía Arenas en La Habana, poco tiempo antes de huir hacia los Estados Unidos- la verdad: a mí me gusta la literatura como una parte de la vida, pero si a mí me condenaran a ser solamente un escritor, no escribiría.” [C. Guzmán, 1980]. La actividad escrituraria era para Reinaldo Arenas *evolutiva* -tenía su inicio, tendría su fin: la dimensión biológica iba por otros carriles (con o sin Lázaro).

Hay artículos periodísticos que a veces duran más de dos días y provocan (sanamente) un cierto revuelo -que es vuelo (literalmente en Cuba) en el mejor de los casos. *Los anillos de la serpiente* es un ejemplo a la mano. Otro, un poco más distante pero específico, fue *Caído en el campo del honor* del ibérico Juan Goytisolo -homenaje, si los hubo, en el ya lejano 1990. La cortesía exige que uno no discuta los obituarios: básteme decir que lo interesante es Arenas (no Goytisolo) y, aunque ciertas afirmaciones de aquel artículo me den que (mal) pensar, este evento se constituyó quizás, es necesario decirlo, en una de las primeras ocasiones que el nombre de Reinaldo Arenas salía de un círculo reducido de universitarios estudiosos de su obra y de cubanos en exilio (la otra ocasión, junto al polémico *Conducta impropia*, fue tal vez el luego llamado “plebiscito a Fidel Castro” en 1988).

¹¹¹ Ésta y otras interesantes perspectivas son tratadas en un libro de próxima aparición titulado *Mármoles finales: El mundo literario de Reinaldo Arenas, sus clientes y algunos lectores*. Allí, además, se analiza una perspectiva historiográfica respecto de la obra de Arenas.

Hay, como se sabe, campos de batalla y otros campos llamados del conocimiento -sin olvidar los de concentramiento. Hay incluso sociólogos que aseguran son casi lo mismo [P. Bourdieu, 1992], con lo cual Arenas sin duda estaría de acuerdo. Por este camino se me ocurrió que el título de este escrito debería ser *Carta abierta a El Caimán Afeitado* pero después me dije a qué meterme con vainas poco arenosas y muy cementeras, cuestiones de otros tiempos -cuando Reynaldo Arenas todavía no era Reinaldo Arenas, agregan mis cubanos amigos con preciso sentido historiográfico- a mí momentáneamente indiferentes. De allí que, tratando de no llamar en causa otras causas, el título finalmente elegido se refiera, como creo haber descrito, a un problema estrictamente escriturario: ¿sobrevivirán las Letras Cubanas de La Habana al negocio que están buscando con esa narración biobibliográfica que por comodidad de las fórmulas llamamos Reinaldo Arenas?

Exeter, January 20, 1997.

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Appendix 4

Reinaldo Arenas: alucinaciones, fantasía y realidad
(1990)

1. The Editors: 'Columbia University/ City University of New York'

The introduction to this work is no exception when it comes to confusing Reinaldo Arenas's possible auto/biographical story with the bibliographical narration attributed to the same, and in turn with the author bearing the name of Arenas. 'Como el protagonista de su primera novela *Celestino antes del alba* (1967), Reinaldo Arenas de niño escribía en las hojas de los árboles que poblaban la finca familiar.' [Rozencvaig/Miyares, 1990: vii]. The single biographical possibility offered by this work is, as we have seen in other literary analyses, to consider the plot of the novels attributed to the author Arenas and, in particular, to attribute to the author Arenas the events and emotions involving the heroes of these. The rest is a chronological invention of the critics - as, for example, saying that 'los primeros cuentos y la primera novela burlan la censura' when in fact it is known that not only was Arenas working for the government but he also received an award from the government, and indeed published reviews in an official publication. Censorship can be spoken of, for example, in the case of Delfín Prats, a friend of Arenas, who *hadn't published a book in Cuba* until 1987 [*Para festejar el ascenso de Icaro*, Letras Cubanas, La Havana] although he had written poems and despite the fact that his book

Lenguaje de mudos, published in Madrid in 1970, was known and highly regarded. The undoubted censorship suffered by Arenas in Cuba in principle had, as Arenas himself explains in *Antes que anochezca*, nothing to do with his literature, which, truth to tell, was at that point non-existent [the edition of two thousand copies produced by UNEAC of *Celestino antes del alba*, for example, 'disappeared' in a week]. As the editors maintain with aptness and contradiction, 'Reinaldo Arenas no existe en Cuba. Sus libros no circulan en el país.' [Rozencvaig/Miyares, 1990: vii].

This confusion and this novelesque origin of the biographical account shows, nonetheless, how relevant and necessary is the presence of an auto/biographical story to the analyses proposed by literary critics, most often guised as 'offering information to the reader' about an author who, as appropriate, is 'practically unknown' or 'internationally recognised'. The inclusion of a 'chronology of Reinaldo Arenas' at the very beginning of this book is undoubtedly confirmation of such relevance.

The introduction to this book is probably the first clear exposition made by a literary critics (P. Rozencvaig and Hernández Miyares in this case) in favour of Arenas' hypotheses about a 'pentagonía'; that is, those works grouped together under the name of *Reinaldo Arenas: alucinaciones, fantasía y realidad* can be taken as an ensemble, as the first exercise in argument, by literary critics, the historiographical reading which Arenas termed 'pentagonía'. 'Los trabajos dedicados a las novelas que pertenecen a la *pentagonía* aparecen en orden secuencial, puesto que hemos creído conveniente no separarlos para facilitarle al lector el análisis de esas obras sin interrupción.' [Rozencvaig/Miyares, 1990: ix]. The editors and analysts have confirmed the author Arenas's hypothesis in that, despite the fact that

each novel presents a different plot with different characters, it can also be read together if referred to in relation to the history of the godlike manifestations of the government of the island of Cuba, as if this last said something about the inhabitants of that island, about their tastes and preferences and as if that, in the final instance, were relevant or had anything to do with the activity of writing itself.

The editors, on the other hand, refer to a 'faithfulness to historiographical fact' without the meaning of this being at all clear, and they then associate this entelechy with what would supposedly be Arenas's major achievement where 'the autobiographical (...) overlaps with fantasy' [Rozencaig/Miyares, 1990: vii]. The meaning of this last statement eludes my attempts to grasp it. I wonder, nevertheless, what purpose Arenas's fictitious exercise can have in this perspective, given that any narrative identity, and in fact all biography, can only be a result of scriptorial activity.

2. E. R. M., 'Yale University'

It is not the author who bears the name of Arenas who *takes the floor* here but the literary critic who signs the article. In contrast to what happens with other critics who deal with Arenas in this work, in this case it is Emir Rodríguez Monegal who deals with Reinaldo Arenas. For this very reason, the fact that the article dates from 1985 does not stand in the way of its validity (as it would for those literary critics without a registered brand name who can only acquire a name in the market by sketching out 'what is new' or 'the latest') but is rather a sign of its value. All the more so when one bears in mind that the Uruguayan, Rodríguez Monegal died in 1985. In terms of the academic market the fact that this article should appear as the first of the series not only speaks of the said critic's market

value but also of his position as 'guest of honour'. Rodríguez Monegal is a registered brand name in the world of Latin American criticism and a visitor to one of the lesser groups that compose it, identified as 'Cubanistas'. This is 'Yale University', with the name of Rodríguez Monegal giving the green light for the author Arenas to have, for the first time an entire book dedicated exclusively to him in the North American academic circuit.

Rodríguez Monegal takes precise aim at Arenas's non-existence, bookwise, until 1980, of which the case of *Celestino antes del alba* is perhaps the best-known. 'A pesar de contar con varias ediciones y más de un título, *Celestino* pasó inadvertido hasta su publicación en Venezuela (Caracas, Monte Avila, 1980).' [Rodríguez Monegal, 1990: 6].

Another interesting aspect of this writing is undoubtedly the perspective offered on Arenas's books to the extent that the first aspects of Arenas's auto/biographical story and the appearance of an authorship are due to diffusion in the Spanish language market (above all on the academic circuit) of *El mundo alucinante*. To this effect Rodríguez Monegal maintains that, 'En cierto sentido, es un libro singular y único, y que no representa a Arenas en su totalidad. Pero como es el que ha sido leído y discutido en casi todo el mundo occidental, es el libro por el que Arenas ha sido juzgado.' [Rodríguez Monegal, 1990: 6]. What is more, leaving aside this idea of 'representation' posited by Rodríguez Monegal, one could say that, in theory, until almost 1984, in market terms, Arenas (author and bibliographical narration are the same thing here) is *El mundo alucinante*. It is in fact as a result of this initial association that Reinaldo Arenas's whole *oeuvre* is constantly impregnated with a confusion between plot and auto/biographical story, between author and hero,

between bibliographical narrative and autobiographical events. As a result it is understandable that Rodríguez Monegal himself should say that 'the fame of *El mundo alucinante* has fostered further confusions' [1990, 6]. But despite Rodríguez Monegal's observation that the 'pre-eminencia acordada por las circunstancias a *El mundo alucinante* dentro del canon de Arenas ha distorsionado el punto de vista sobre el autor' [1990, 6], the Uruguayan critic does not quite realize to what extent this *distortion* makes Arenas's *oeuvre* what it is in its totality, and to what extent Arenas himself encouraged this in order to position the editions of his manuscripts.

Along with Alicia Borinsky's essays [1975], already commented on, this brief analysis by Rodríguez Monegal of *El mundo alucinante* and, in the light of this, of the remaining books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas, is perhaps the most relevant piece to have been written in this regard. Nevertheless it does not have the scope to eliminate the *sbaglio*, which is the association of the idea of Arenas' literature with a notion of time, as Rodríguez Monegal in effect attempts to do through a comparison with Borges's 'El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan'. Rodríguez Monegal himself says: 'Todo ocurre y no ocurre al mismo tiempo. Pocas veces se ha llevado a extremos tan increíbles el privilegio del narrador de moverse en una dimensión no disyuntiva de la realidad (para apropiarse de la distinción de Julia Kristeva). En esta novela no hay alternativas: todas son posibles (o imposibles) al mismo tiempo.' [Rodríguez Monegal, 1990: 10]. The only possible explanation for this *contemporaneity* is that of conceiving a 'visual literature', as Arenas himself proposes; that is, that of conceiving the fictitious transfers and movements not in the shape of time but as changes of space, of image, of vision, of observation-point. For this reason Rodríguez Monegal hits the mark when he maintains that 'es

incorrecto hablar de "personajes", y de "acontecimientos", de una "historia". La única realidad del texto es el texto mismo, y el texto es alucinatorio.' [Rodríguez Monegal, 1990: 11].

'El mundo laberíntico de Reinaldo Arenas', as the title of the piece, also signals the phantasmatic character which afflicts both the auto/biographical story and its relationship with the bibliographical narration. This is the already -mentioned ghost of Arenas, to which I will be referring again later. 'Para aumentar y hasta perfeccionar la confusión, el estatuto de Arenas como ciudadano cubano fue muy discutible por más de una década. Se sabía que residía en La Habana pero como su obra no era autorizada en Cuba, y no tenía un empleo fijo, era difícil saber qué pensaba realmente. Con la expulsión de indeseables por el puerto de El Mariel, en 1980, la posición de Arenas quedó aclarada. Refugiado en los Estados Unidos, ha sido elocuente en denunciar las persecuciones políticas de que fue objeto en la isla.' [Rodríguez Monegal, 1990: 6]. On the contrary, to my understanding, Arenas's escape from Cuba only served to consolidate that spectral figure of which Arenas would make use on more than one occasion.

Finally, it should be highlighted that Rodríguez Monegal indicates the existence of what has been called the 'red de manuscritos': 'Tal vez haya otra explicación. Se la podría encontrar en el método de composición de Arenas. De hecho, puede decirse que hasta 1982 con la publicación de *Otra vez el mar*, Arenas ha producido un texto único, separado en distintos volúmenes por razones que todavía no son muy claras.' [1990, 10]. If other critics had engaged with Arenas's *oeuvre* as did Rodríguez Monegal, the manufacture of Reinaldo Arenas's bibliographical narration would

have been different. But this is a counterfactual conditional of little value and one which I do not intend to engage with here.

3. S.S., 'Saint Léonard, París'

Situated in conditions similar to those of the previous analysis, this piece of writing is sustained by the author who signs it and not by the argument it states: Severo Sarduy is the writer consecrated by the market and the academic communities, who consents to opine on Reinaldo Arenas - a gesture which in itself shows the *quality* of the works attributed to the author Reinaldo Arenas. Supposedly Severo Sarduy 'does not busy himself with any old person who scribbles a couple of lines' and thus it was understood by the editors of this book when they placed this essay at the beginning, bearing in mind, in addition, that the piece had already appeared in three different places in 1985.

This work on Arenas is perhaps one of the few not written in academic jargon and, to some extent, it is an exercise in *rewriting* as understood by Arenas . It is no coincidence that it should bear the title 'Escrito sobre Arenas'.

'History is a serious farce' [Sarduy, 1990: 15] is perhaps one of the phrases that comes closest to Arenas. But the description of the encounter between an auto/biographical account and a bibliographical narration is perhaps the greatest achievement of 'Escrito sobre Arenas': 'Fue cuando oí hablar a Reinaldo Arenas en persona que comprendí su obra, o que la disfruté mejor. Arenas subraya palabras al hablar, o las dispone en otra tipografía,

o las agranda hipertróficamente, o las dice y enseguida las tacha: se trata de un conversador gráfico.' [Sarduy, 1990: 16].

Finally, the multiplicity of characters and the narrator's plural voice coming and going without a precise order or programme is another of the aspects highlighted by this writing. Sarduy does not overlook it (as do the editors) nor does he object (as does Rodríguez Monegal) to the confusion between auto/biography and the author named Arenas, but on the contrary, makes use of it, takes advantage of it - a true 'Cubanismo', if such a thing can exist.

4. K.S., 'University of Miami'

This piece of writing claims to deal with and engage with Reinaldo Arenas' 'unconscious' or 'subconscious'. In fact it consists of a general application of the principal literary theories attributed to Sigmund Freud and as proof of their validity the critic offers an enumeration of events in the various plots of Arenas's novels in which erect phalluses and mothers of all kinds abound.

The critic maintains, 'Una lectura cuidadosa de las obras de Arenas nos muestra una plétora de representaciones fálicas y fantasías homoeróticas (con una concomitante denigración y temor a la mujer con la cual, sin embargo, se identifica), pero el leitmotif psicológico esencial, vinculado con las manifestaciones ya mencionadas, tiene que ver con los sentimientos incestuosos y las ansiedades respecto a la madre y su relación patológica con un hijo joven. La madre, muy a menudo dominante, también se muestra cariñosa, y esta oscilación entre la segunda imagen de la madre, compendio de todas sus virtudes, y la primera, un arquetipo negativo, nos comunica la vuelta del autor a un período temporal en el

cual podía manifestarse abiertamente su fantasía sexual.' [Schwartz, 1990: 19-20]. This is the initial conjecture to which are added some thirty quotations from psychoanalytical bibliography, and some others from stories in Arenas's books, to conclude that 'las novelas de Arenas, llenas de arquetipos femeninos negativos, describen escenas violentas cuyos protagonistas son mujeres' [Schwartz, 1990: 24], that 'en sus novelas, Arenas hace incapié en los leitmotifs de la sumersión y de la salida del agua' [Schwartz, 1990: 26] or that 'la madre y el estado pre-natal, tanto como el período de amamantamiento, metaforizan, en el plano literario una tranquilidad y felicidad que Arenas, según algunas entrevistas, nunca llegó a tener como adulto' [Schwartz, 1990: 26]. These last exercises do not appear to contribute anything very much, other than the persistent confusion between the biological dimension of the Cuban person named Reinaldo Arenas and the author bearing the same name.

Consequently, other than the exercise of using a Freudian bibliography, I can see no particular interest or contribution in readings of this type to Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*: Oedipus complex, homosexuality, castration, etc., are notions the discovery of whose citing in the plots of the books attributed to Arenas says very little about the latter. A Freudian reading of the plot of the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas tells us more about the literary critic than it proposes about Arenas himself, who supposedly requires it. This work could be re-formulated under the title *Maternidad e incesto: fantasías en la narrativa de Kessel Schwartz*.

The major problem with this kind of work is that it confuses the biological dimension of a person called Reinaldo Arenas with the auto/biographical story of Arenas or with the author of a series of novels who was also named Arenas.

5. E. M. S., 'Georgetown University'

This analysis deals with the auto/biographical story of Reinaldo Arenas and is carried out in precisely the terms formulated by Arenas himself, that is, as bibliographical narration - it is *literary biography*, in Borgesian terms. Unfortunately, the author of this article is convinced that the history of governments on the island of Cuba ('Cuban politics since 1970' [p. 36]) can and should explain Reinaldo Arenas's writing activity, which reduces Arenas's literature to the journalistic level of other authors *who write for* that governmental history. Miguel Barnet is an example of this, mentioned several times by Arenas himself. Expressions such as 'his version of events' [p. 36] or "objective circumstances" [p. 36] are evident consequences of this visual mishap.

On the other hand, this analysis presents some brief details about the manuscripts and editions of Arenas, early books which could prove to be of use. 'En 1965, cuando los primeros trabajos de Arenas comenzaron a aparecer en La Habana, se le consideraba un escritor de la Revolución.' [Santí, 1990: 29], 'La miseria de Arenas se refleja en su situación de no-persona' [Santí, 1990: 35].

The critic does not manage to see the relationship between auto/biographical story, invention of an author and composition of the novel's characters. Hence he speaks of a supposed 'prophecy' in order to refer to the link between Fray Servando Teresa de Mier and the auto/biographical account attributed to the author bearing the name of Arenas. Some imprecisions, which doubtless proceed in part from the author Arenas himself, complete this picture - as, for example, that (1)*Con los ojos cerrados* was presented to a UNEAC competition and

won a prize [p. 31], (2) that the second version of *Otra vez el mar* was taken out ('sacada') to France in 1973 [p. 33], (3) that Arenas was 'editor' of *La Gaceta de Cuba* [p. 32] or (4) that the article 'Celestino y yo' is a response to the jury who in 1964 gave him a 'mention' for *Celestino antes del alba* [p. 31].

This article contains, nevertheless, a passage which could be taken as a fitting invention of the year 1980 in Reinaldo Arenas's biography:

Después de llegar a Estados Unidos el 6 de mayo de 1980, Arenas gestionó la publicación de la primera edición en español de *El palacio*, casi diez años después de haber terminado el manuscrito, y de *El central*. Tras un verano de conferencias en la Florida, Nueva York, Puerto Rico y Venezuela, enseñó un curso sobre poesía cubana en la Universidad Internacional de la Florida en Miami. En diciembre de ese mismo año se mudó a la ciudad de Nueva York. [Santí, 1990: 35].

6. E. A-B., 'City University of New York'

Sustained by such terms as 'ideal world' [p. 39], 'objective reality' [p. 39], 'social level' [p. 42], and others, this piece of writing is insignificant and dull. The general way in which it refers to *Termina el desfile* could be applied to any writing, be it by Arenas or not. At no moment, for example, is a hypothesis proposed as to the reason for the changes instituted by Arenas between the editions of 1972 and 1981. A constant reference to a 'theme of oscillation between the real and the imaginary' [p. 39] is all that this work offers by means of an exposition of the plots of the various stories, as if these so-called 'constant themes' could signify something taken thus, in a vacuum or, worse still, as if Arenas's writings, following

the manuscripts's dates, could be read in relation to the chronology of the governments of the island of Cuba.

7. M. I. L., 'Syracuse University'

The itinerary of this article, it could be said, is given in a title - 'El papel de los dos Reinaldos en *Los Heridos*'- which promises and ends in a banal conclusion. Such terms as 'crude realism' [p. 50], 'direct observation of reality ' [p. 50] and 'subjective impression' [p. 50] lead to this journalistic conclusion.

According to the writer of this article there is *a reality* and from it appears Arenas 'ofreciéndonos retratos de personas y sucesos con una visión sesgada y aun torcida conforme a sus propósitos narrativos' [p. 45]. As if this were not enough to scare anyone, the writer suggests that these elements are 'ironic touches' [p. 45] (or, even more risibly, 'dramatic irony' [p. 49]) and throughout the four pages of this journalistic writing he christens as ironic every possible relationship between the characters in the story entitled 'Los heridos'. In this sense, it makes no difference whether he is speaking of Arenas or of any other author. At least the writer of the article makes it clear in a final note that he bears sole responsibility for the work.

8. W. L. S., 'West Virginia University'

Through an analysis of 'García Márquez' (it is never made clear whether he is referring to a book, or to an *oeuvre*, or an author) this literary critic attempts to demonstrate how the female character 'La vieja Rosa' belongs to the commercial universe of Macondo. This is because 'el estilo de Arenas se ajusta al tema' [p. 52] , as the author says.

This article displays how much literary critics and journalists owe to the books attributed to García Márquez and how they are prevented from thinking of any other idea of literature than that of this twentieth century Colombian -this century having concluded at least fifteen years ago.

9. N. M., 'Pomona College'

This work has an interesting start, 'El azaroso destino editorial de la primera novela de Reinaldo Arenas bien pudiera servir de guía a la lectura de un texto cuya preocupación fundamental parece centrarse en el acto de nombrar.' [Montenegro, 1990: 56]. Following this line there appears in this piece of work the suggestion of a reading of the 'pentagonía' proposed by Arenas no longer in relation to the history of the governments of Cuba, as happens with most literary critics, but rather in relation to a 'figure of the writer' [p. 56]. Unfortunately the analysis makes no progress in this matter.

There is a convincing proposal, independent of the terminology employed, of 'two discursive ideologies' counterposed from which the relevance of *Celestino antes del alba* can be concluded: 'A través de este constante choque entre dos orientaciones diferentes de la palabra, la utilitaria y la lúdica, se articula el sistema discursivo de Cantando en el pozo.' [Montenegro, 1990: 58]. This hypothesis permits us to understand that in *Cantando en el pozo* exists 'la preocupación (...) por presentarse como sistema verbal, presentación que se lleva a cabo mediante la sistemática destrucción de fórmulas de verosimilitud obedientes a una realidad exterior a la narrativa...' [Montenegro, 1990: 57]. In this sense the literary critic refers to a constant destruction/construction of the very notion of the

fictitious, which is undoubtedly one of the 'axes' of that *unity* we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*: 'Mediante este proceso de destrucción se propone la autonomía de una realidad textual que se origina en el campo de la palabra, operación que se realiza, entre otras maneras, mediante la literalización del lenguaje figurado.' [Montenegro, 1990: 60]. Although the analysis does not clarify this *falla* between writing and what the critic calls 'word', what does emerge with some clarity is the problem of the incommensurability between perception and thought -which, as I have pointed out on many occasions, is fundamental in Arenas's *oeuvre*-, at least in relation to the notion of fiction: 'Mediante esa mirada (...) se plantea la posición de una ficción que reclama el derecho de ser aceptada como realidad en sus propios términos: con el reconocimiento de su ficcionalidad.' [Montenegro, 1990: 61].

Ignoring the references to psychoanalytic theory and to a certain 'narcissistic impulse' [p. 61], another noteworthy aspect of this piece is the interpretation of the space of the pool in the novel. This is a reading to be respected which also points out how much the Spanish title of *Cantando en el pozo* owes to the French edition of *Celestino antes del alba* from nine years earlier.

10. A.M. R., 'University of Iowa'

Having summarised and agreed with a critical tradition which sees in Arenas's novels a supposed 'alteration of reality' [p. 65] (without ever explaining what this reality is, and what it is like), the critic starts his working hypothesis with another classic confusion, mixing rather than distinguishing between an auto/biographical ambit and a bookish one linked to the author bearing the name of Arenas - in such a way that the state of poverty of the people of Holguín in Cuba, Arenas's opinions in

some interviews, certain allusions to a 'poetic language' and to a Frenchman surnamed Baudrillard, all go in tandem and in carnival mode. This Babelic article refers to an 'economy' (or to several), it speaks of 'the text's "real" ambit' and of its 'symbolic' one, it mentions 'Arenas's narrative system' which is, apparently, 'constructed from an interdependence between poetic language and prosaic genre' [p. 66]. The mention of Baudrillard and of a certain 'textual economy' [p. 66] are two constants of this language <à la Béjar> (to put it in terms of the 'Cubanismo' with which I am concerned) which never shows its terms and whose appeal to double-meanings and terms not there in the writer himself, turns it into yet another one of these literary exercises of literary criticism which we have already seen with variations. All of this is crowned by profound conclusions such as the following : 'La dimensión simbólica en los escritos de Arenas transgrede el principio ordenador de la sociedad contemporánea, la discriminación social contra los muertos, relegados al espacio proscrito de las tumbas...' [p. 74].

We can say indisputably that this is a six page article devoted to the French writer Jean Baudrillard and to some other European academics where, in addition, every so often titles and passages of the novels of the Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas are mentioned.

11. E. P. M. G., 'Nothern Illinois University'

Using a notion or precept of reality to explain, contemplate or grasp the activity of writing called literature is a legacy of the European nineteenth century which the majority of academic literary critics dealing with Reinaldo Arenas cannot overcome. This article is no exception.

According to the writer of the article there is in Arenas a 'reality which he turns into literature' [p. 81] and tries to explain. This reality would be 'his/our reality'. It is a quick step from there to placing Arenas as a privileged witness or testimony. 'El novelista se nos presenta así como el vocero, el intérprete de esa realidad suya/nuestra...' [p. 81]. Nobody explains what this reality is, nor what its meaning or what, at very least, are the consequences of a notion of the real in Reinaldo Arenas's novels: we are once again in the realm of the inferences and presuppositions which so please the academic literary critic. To say, for example, that in *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* 'abunda el elemento fantástico: alucinaciones, obsesiones, sueños, impulsos que cooperan para formar la intrincada fantasmagoría que es el texto' [p. 81] is little more than hackneyed. This is inevitable when starting from such an ephemeral basis; however some conclusions do not fail to astonish with their short-sightedness: 'El libro es Cuba y su historia republicana desde la voz de su intérprete.' [p. 82].

The assumption of a 'textual theory' (also never explained) and the history of the governments of the island of Cuba are mixed here, apparently explaining each other - a proposal which, while it may have been present in other critics, does not cease to be astonishing. Such expressions as 'sociopolitical reality' [p. 89], 'narrative level' [p. 88], 'official historicity' [p. 87], etc., are an only too just accompaniment.

The conclusion of this essay, which could not refrain from having recourse to the plot (despite basing itself upon academic suppositions not found there and which are never described or explained) is: 'Importa volver sobre las fugas de Fortunato y Adolfinia para apuntar que Arenas combina lo fantástico y lo real es una prodigiosa y horrible fantasmagoría

proyectando, a través del doble drama de los personajes, una danza macabra y burlesca que nos conmueve profundamente.' [p. 88]. To use six pages, a score of notes and three or four bibliographical references to reach this statement is part of that entertaining academic eccentricity in which the critics talk more about themselves and about the places where they work than about a Cuban writer bearing the name of Reinaldo Arenas.

12. F. G., 'Emerson College'

This vindicable article is inscribed within that perspective which we consider an alternative to the interpretation of the 'pentagonía' proposed by Arenas, that is, the 'pentagonía' as a *literary biography* in Borgesian terms rather than the historicist reading proposed by many of the critics starting from Arenas's indications: 'Haremos una lectura de *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* (1980), donde el protagonista Fortunato descubre su condición de poeta. Luego pasaremos al análisis de *Otra vez el mar* (1982), donde el silencio y la imagen finalmente dan nombre a la voz del narrador que se proyecta al final de la novela.' [González, 1990: 93].

Despite this, the critic does not specify any difference between auto/biographical story, authorship and the novels, so that we do not know to whom to attribute his statements, although they are often pertinent and supposedly refer to the novels' plots. In this sense I believe that if the hypotheses of the critic Flora González are pertinent this is because they are located in the relationship between author and auto/biography, in relation to the bibliographical story. In other words, the hypothesis of a literary biography can be given solely in the light of an analysis in which the link between author, auto/biographical story and bibliographical narration is defined.

Starting from this framework, some viable statements by critics can be understood. 'Para interpretar,' maintains this critic, 'el poeta se ubica en la calma, en la ausencia del ruido. Para mirar, para interpretar, hay que cerrar/abrir los ojos. La creación consiste en el acto contradictorio de ver, de iluminarse, con los ojos cerrados.' [González, 1990: 92]. 'Interpretar significa dar sentido al silencio en el lenguaje.' [González, 1990: 93]. The hypothesis of this work is that creation - writing, interpretation, fiction - is produced 'starting from silence'. An idea of silence, not only as a connecting theme of the novels, but also as located at the very origin of the notions of interpretation and creation of writing in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* is possibly one of the most interesting aspects for consideration in this work. For this reason I believe that the statement, 'El concepto de la epifanía de la creación a raíz del silencio prevalece en la obra de Reinaldo Arenas.' [González, 1990: 98] is appropriate, even when it does not go much deeper into the subject.

Another suggestion which this article makes but does not develop, is that which refers to images in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, and to the possible relation of these with regard to Lezama Lima's ideas. 'Los conceptos de ritmo e imagen concuerdan en un lenguaje que surge entre el abrir y cerrar de ojos, en un lenguaje que, poblado de imágenes, evoca la voz silente del poeta.' [González, 1990: 93]. Moreover this suggestion, although as has been said the critic does not remark on it, offers a way of formalizing a limit of the writable, whose insistence in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* cannot fail to have consequences. 'La evasión constante del significado mediante imágenes que niegan lo dicho y un yo que se dezplaza, producen el silencio evocativo en *Otra vez el mar*. Más que preguntar ¿Qué es lo que dice el lenguaje? La novela pregunta cómo lo dice?' [González, 1990:

102]. In fact the images do not 'deny what has been said' but display the impossibility of the language itself to refer itself to becoming ('devenir'), to what has the form of the present.

Nevertheless the idea of language as a meeting place for opposite meanings or directions ('Language constitutes the appropriate place for the meeting of opposites' [p. 94]) seems a limited conjecture if it is not developed in the light of a theory of writing in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. In this sense, such statements as 'expression through the visual in the absence of the voice' [González, 1990: 99] become totally destitute of plausible meaning.

13. R. V., 'Georgetown University'

This is the typical school-manual article where a biographical synopsis and argument supposedly introduce us to the 'material', give us the 'antecedents' after which an account of the plot completes the 'panorama'. 'Times', 'characters', 'techniques' and a constant reference to the history of the governments of the island of Cuba are the obvious elements to be unfolded. As in every manual, the article does not consider it worth making the distinction between author and auto/biographical story or between bibliographical narration and auto/biographical story; as a result, Reinaldo Arenas seems like a nineteenth century writer - because, as is known, in manuals, authors always belong to the nineteenth century [see for example Ludmer, 1999].

In the final instance this piece can only appeal to the legitimacy it would supposedly be given by constituting a 'representation' of the history of the governments on the island of Cuba. *'Otra vez el mar es la novela del*

desgarramiento ante una revolución deformada, traicionada, en este caso específico la Revolución Cubana.' [Valero, 1990: 104]. To classify Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* in terms of a literary institution is undoubtedly the purpose of such works as this. Therefore the reference to a 'novel of dictatorship' should surprise no one.

To judge from this critic, the only difference between Cirilo Villaverde and Reinaldo Arenas would be that the first used a pen and the second a typewriter. Otherwise they could have come across each other at Coppelia or looking at the angel of Jiribilla.

14. J. O., 'Colby College'

We have already seen how the 'carnivalization' of certain of Reinaldo Arenas's books responded more to a reading on the part of the academic community than to a specific mention in the manuscripts or interviews attributed to Reinaldo Arenas. This piece, as was to be expected, insists upon that carnivalization and now incorporates to it *Otra vez el mar*. As seen already, this carnivalization depends for its functioning and validation on an earlier conception in which the history of the governments of Cuba, an auto/biographical story and an account of plots confuse and are confused. To do this the critic also speaks of 'ideological content', 'oppressive circumstances' and such like.

According to such academic fantasies, novels such as those of Arenas would have the purpose of 'unmasking a totalitarian regime and a narrative system' [p. 115]. If this were the purpose of Reinaldo Arenas's writing, it

would be a clear case of journalism and in that case would place it within the history of the governments of the island of Cuba.

Fortunately, the critic informs us that he will leave 'para otro estudio la interesante conexión que se establece en *Otra vez el mar* entre sexo y texto, entre homosexualidad y homotextualidad (auto-referencialidad).' [p. 123]. To move from the gratuitous confusion of diverse analyses to the sexist thesis about Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*: that is the itinerary suggested in this article.

A good strategy, such as that of quoting the index of *Otra vez el mar*, loses all its impact when it is proven that the analysis takes the index in its obvious sense as that of a 'description of content'. In this analysis, in addition, it can be confirmed to what extent certain literary critics confuse an idea of writing in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* and the commercial form in which some editions of Arenas's manuscripts have become known publicly. In other words, that the author Arenas produces fictions ('a fictional account' [p. 116], the critic states) is a matter for debate, as also is what we refer to as 'fictions'. The condition of 'the novel' in which *Otra vez el mar* was edited in the Spanish language publishing market confused many critics about a previous and fundamental observation on the activity of writing exercised by Arenas: *Otra vez el mar* is a *book*, a version of a manuscript.

Having already been taken to saturation point by analyses dedicated to *El mundo alucinante*, this idea of carnival contributes nothing new or interesting. As suggested, it would be more instructive to analyse the critic's article itself in terms of 'carnavalesque topoi'.

Finally in this article we find out that there exists something called the 'self-conscious novel' [p. 121] and that *Otra vez el mar* is one of these. As if this were not enough, the critic also holds that the novel 'invites us to formulate a relation between sex and text' [p. 120] and to consider 'the situation of the writer in Cuba' [p. 121]. With such nineteenth-century conceptions about writing it comes as no surprise that this article by the academic literary critic Jorge Olivares should be a dull replica of another published under the title 'Carnival and the Novel: Reinaldo Arenas' *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas*', five years earlier [Olivares, 1985].

15. A. G. de la S., 'New York University'

Prolonging the journalistic and nineteenth century vein, this article postulates the belief that at very least there exists in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* an ineluctable relationship between what he called 'literature' and 'politics and theology' [p. 126]. As such a hypothesis can obviously not be done justice in four pages, the journalist ends up re-telling the plot of *El mundo alucinante*, commenting on some superficial aspects of the Mexican edition of 1969 and, inevitably, offering a series of unremarkable biographical circumstances which, as with any nineteenth century conception, constitute the ultimate legitimacy with which to appeal in order to legitimize a literary argument.

If published at the end of the seventies as an article in the Sunday supplement of the *Miami Herald*, this article would have been of great use, in terms of historiography and of the market. Under present conditions it only serves as one more proof of the deplorable consequences of some aspects of literary criticism dealing with 'Hispanoamerican studies'.

16. D. M. K., 'The City University of New York'

Preterition, as we know, is the name given to the action where a speaker says that they are not going to say what in reality they are already saying. This article entitled 'Elementos barrocos en *El mundo alucinante*' is an amusing example of preterition, in that it maintains that 'encasillar *El mundo alucinante* como obra barroca o neobarroca no es el propósito de este trabajo' [p. 136] and yet the following six pages are devoted to defining a notion of the baroque in *El mundo alucinante* in particular, and in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* generally.

What is interesting in this article is the aspect that dwells not so much on the possible 'baroque elements' discernible in Arenas' book but on how *El mundo alucinante* allows an idea of baroque to be justified inside that institutional narrative known as 'the history of literature' to which academic critics constantly resort, as to a masterplan. In other words, the idea of 'the baroque in Latin America' is nothing but a hierarchy of books put inside a plot by academic communities. In that sense, this article is interesting since it lets us see to what extent the author Arenas had a notion of this and made use of it, but also because it permits us to observe to what extent a series of authors and arguments (often confused) offer an official itinerary (Quevedo-Góngora-Lezama-Sarduy, for example) about any idea of baroque. As I have said, one of Arenas's historiographical achievements is precisely that of having obtained a place in the itinerary to which every critic resorts when, for example, he has to refer to the 'Hispanoamerican baroque'. To say, for instance, that *El mundo alucinante* is a 'picaresque' work, rather than being an attempt to make reference to a possible relationship between the books attributed to Quevedo and Arenas's novel, consists of considering *El mundo alucinante* within a historiographical frame in which the books' plots matter as much

as (or less than) the paratextual elements placing them in the publishing and academic market .

Consequently, I believe that to make reference to a supposed 'baroque language' [p. 138] without having considered the historiographical and mercantile dimension in which the paratextual elements limit and define this unit we know as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, constitutes an ingenuous ignorance produced by the journalistic and nineteenth century declarations which some critics subscribe to.

Referring to *El mundo alucinante*, the critic maintains, 'La afiliación de esta obra a la que se ha dado en llamar la nueva novela hispano-americana se evidencia en la manera en que Reinaldo Arenas establece la escritura como lugar donde todo es posible, y desincorpora y reincorpora la voz narrativa desde las primeras líneas...' [p. 136]. That such a generalization is something new is dubious, but that it distinguishes Reinaldo Arenas amongst other 'Latin American writers' is difficult to take seriously. To read this novel in relation to the composition of an auto/biographical story and of an authorial figure is something this article seems to suggest at some point - for instance, when speaking of 'the adventure of writing' [p. 137] - but unfortunately the suggestion is not clarified. Consequently, any allusion to the history of governments on the island of Cuba or to different happenings in the development of the plot can only be an adornment, shedding light upon the particular condition through which there exists not only an author called Reinaldo Arenas, but also an auto/biographical story and a bibliographical narration of the same name. In this context, to busy oneself defining the baroque with quotations from Lezama Lima or Leo Spitzer seems to me at the very least superficial and vague. Finally, it is worth noting that this critic, like Francisco Soto [1994a], obviously has no

liking for the first translation of Arenas into English, confusing Brotherson with Brotherston. Gordon Brotherston is the name of the first anglophone translator of *El mundo alucinante*, a version now virtually out of circulation because the North American publishers deemed it *too British* [see Hurley, 1995: 41].

17. W. R., 'Universidad Católica del Uruguay'

The first paragraph of this article is enough to cast light on the limits of his analysis. Let us take a brief look at it [Rela, 1990: 147].

1. 'Plantear la novela como discurso de la libertad....': the word 'discourse', as we have seen in Chapter 6, lends itself to an infinity of misunderstandings. To speak of a so-called 'discourse of freedom' has such breadth that said in this way it could mean anything.
2. '...equivale a establecer y convalidar la relación entre el sorprendente mundo real de Fray Servando...': when a literary critic starts an analysis with such assertions as 'real world' we automatically know that the author Arenas will end up giving 'testimony' or being erected as a historian, *avant la lettre*, not to mention a member of the Canon and vindicator of 'the human race'.
3. '...y su poética conversión en alucinante.': this now seems unreadable to me. I presume it refers to a 'fantastical world'.
4. 'Partiendo de esta relación, el análisis del argumento se amplía en cuanto disponemos, en el siglo pasado, de los antecedentes textuales...': The reader is left ignorant of what these 'textual antecedents' might be. Perhaps they refer to books proceeding from the last century, including Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's *Memorias*.
5. '...y en el presente, de la reconstrucción con recursos narrativos': Reconstruction? Of what? What are the narrative resources?

As can be seen, this first paragraph which proposes the hypothesis also immediately presents the analytical limits within which this article will devote itself to analysing some bibliographical aspects of Fray Servando and some descriptions of the plot of Reinaldo Arenas's *El mundo alucinante*.

In this article there is no longer simply confusion between the various levels which make up what we call Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, but also an absolute ignorance of them. The critic is unaware of whether he is referring to the auto/biographical story, the figure of the author, the characters in the novel, books attributed to other authors or to the author of *El mundo alucinante* himself.

18. E. S., 'University of Warsaw'

The virtue and piquancy of this article is developed through its carrying out simultaneously some interesting observations about *El mundo alucinante* (which could easily be extended to the rest of Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*), and a bibliographical run - by means of quotations and references - through some of the most respected authors of the current literary and academic market. All of this in only four pages.

Despite the appeal to such vague abstractions as 'real facts' [p. 161], 'official and authoritarian historiography' [p. 161], 'ideological intention' [p. 160] or 'ideological meaning' [p. 59], essential to literary critics dealing with 'Latin American literature', this article presents some interesting aspects.

In the first place, a frame of reference : 'Sería ingenuo suponer que una novela sea un reflejo de la realidad extraliteraria, histórica. Hasta una obra abiertamente "mimética" es más bien una refracción que reflejo del mundo.' [Sklodowska, 1990: 158]. Then, more specifically,

La re-escritura de la historia emprendida por Arenas en la primera década de la Cuba revolucionaria no tiene nada que ver con la tendencia declarada de 'reivindicar' o 'revisar' el pasado como una premisa fundamental de la historiografía revolucionaria oficial. (...) La relativización de la verdad histórica ocurre en *El mundo alucinante* en el proceso de la transformación de *récit* en *discours*, del material narrativo en una forma estética [Sklodowska, 1990: 158].

Although the critic does not establish this, there is here an indication that leads us to consider Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* in terms of scriptorial activity rather than literature. For this reason undoubtedly *Blindness and Insight* is the opportune quotation : 'Las palabras de Paul de Man ofrecen una sucinta conclusión al respecto: "...the bases for historical knowledge are not the empirical facts but written texts, even if these texts masquerade in the guise of wars or revolutions".' [Sklodowska, 1990: 159].

Secondly, this article opposes itself to the general opinion of those literary critics who position Arenas's readers in a certain collusive comfort, be it through the idea of a 'testimonianza' [Soto, 1994a] or through the writing of a 'real history' [Valero, 1991 and Koch, 1990]:

Mientras que la aparente neutralidad de las técnicas "realistas" -las más cercanas al discurso historiográfico, objetivo, científico- tiende a ganar la credibilidad frente al lector, los recursos empleados por Arenas pretenden

alienarlo. Por medio de la "desfamiliarización" de la experiencia, la novela del cubano tiene el mismo efecto que el fenómeno de enajenación estudiado por Brecht en una obra dramática: impide una identificación del lector con el texto. [Sklodowska, 1990: 159].

I will return later to this aspect, which grasps the expectation and the idea of a *lector in fabula* (like an 'Empirical Reader', in Eco's terms [1979]).

Thirdly, although the article does not establish an analytical distinction within this narrative set known as Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*, there is the indication of an alternative reading of the books grouped together under the tag of 'pentagonía' - and, as found in Flora González, this reading is based on the consideration of a privileged site for the auto/biographical story, as well as an incipient proposal of what we have identified, following Reinhard Koselleck, as 'horizon d'attente' : '...Arenas recurre a la forma (auto)biográfica... (...) Al reescribir los textos autobiográficos de Fray Servando, Arenas nos ofrece más bien una biografía. El proceso en sí tiende a subrayar que la historia no es el pasado, sino su recuperación *en* el presente *para* el futuro.' [Sklodowska, 1990: 163].

Finally, as I have said, there is in this article a suggestion that the activity of writing has relevance to the consideration of the very idea of literature. 'Este aspecto del libro revela que los trucos que rigen la escritura de cualquier narración, sea "ficticia", sea "histórica" en su intención, son en realidad los mismos.' [Sklodowska, 1990: 163]. And further: 'El hecho de que *El mundo alucinante* no pueda pasar por una obra historiográfica no reside tanto en su veracidad factográfica o en su falta de ella, como en la intención estética que rige el empleo de sus estrategias narrativas' [Sklodowska, 1990: 163]. However, if this last objection, which refers to

a supposed 'aesthetic intention', were to be placed within the perspective offered in *Temps et récit*, we would see how this novel's 'historiographical' consideration depends more on a series of paratextual strategies, readers' expectations and marketing decisions, as postulated in my consideration of the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas.

19. R. D. S., 'The University of Kansas'

This article is determined to continue in the confused *melée* where Reinaldo Arenas' auto/biographical story is composed by the characters of the books attributed to an author of the same name which, if openly formulated as an initial hypothesis, would be of interest but in fact it only appears as Ingrès's diffuse and mute *violin*. In great measure, it could be said, the novelesque heroes *realize* Reinaldo Arenas biographically: the point is that this article not only fails to formulate it openly but also takes no account of it.

Bearing the title of 'La ideología de Fray Servando', this article adds itself to the lengthy series of journalistic vaguenesses dedicated to Reinaldo Arenas's name, without us ever finding out whether they are referring to a book, an author or a biography bearing that name. To judge by this critic's work, *El mundo alucinante* 'is a daring portrait of the admirable and dismaying aspects of ideological extremism' [p. 169]. What this 'ideological extremism' might be is never explained, and neither is the meaning of such expressions as 'the "facts" of history' [p. 167] or such statements as 'the past is tinged with the present, that is, the time of writing the novel' [p. 167].

Paul Ricoeur [1986] maintains that the *imaginaire social* is 'an idea in the Kantian sense' [1986, 288]. He adds, 'La vérité de notre condition est que

le lien analogique qui fait de tout homme mon semblable ne nous est accessible qu'à travers un certain nombre de pratiques imaginatives, telles que l'idéologie et l'utopie.' [1986, 228]. The 'social imaginary' is then composed, according to Ricoeur, of two inseparable expressions, the notion of ideology and that of Utopia. In this sense, the notion of ideology has three distinct uses for Ricoeur: as distortion or pretence, as legitimation and finally as integration. These three levels as a collective phenomena, are ordered according to their degree of specification.

If it is a question of analysing Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* in terms of ideology, not only would these three levels have to be considered but also the three levels on which this work unfolds: 'relato auto/biográfico, figura de autor y narración bibliográfica'. Although such an analysis is not the purpose of this work, it could nevertheless be said that an analysis of the notion of 'ideology' in Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre* might start with an analysis of the links (1) between distortion and pretence in relation to Reinaldo Arenas's auto/biographical story, (2) between legitimization and the formation of an author figure and, finally, (3) between integration and bibliographical narrative. This analysis should give us, my conjecture being correct, a description of what we have termed Reinaldo Arenas's *biobibliography*, as a clear and ordered expression of the *unity* of what we call the *oeuvre* of Reinaldo Arenas.

Of course, nothing of this nature is postulated in this article which, like other previous ones, would not be out of place in the *Miami Herald's* Sunday supplement.

The title, 'Trenzamientos estructurales en *El Central*', has already prepared us for the multitude of adjectives this article undoubtedly has. The enumeration of different families of words is its final objective.

Such terms as 'old doctrines' [p. 171], 'the destructivists' [p. 171], 'reality' [p. 172], 'Cuban interweaving' [p. 173] and 'structural corruption' [p. 175], to quote only a few examples, serve only to prepare the reader for such conclusions as: (1) 'Cuando Reinaldo Arenas *crea y recrea* sobre lo que cree desde la perspectiva triple del Central Manuel Sanguily en Pinar del Río, le brota el trenzamiento espontáneo' [p. 171], (2) 'Los trenzamientos, a su vez, se trenzan; y, trenzados entre sí, estructuran la complejidad de todo el canevá(s) que no podría bordarse con agujas de la lógica, los estambres de la compasión ni los dedales de la conformidad.' [p. 172], (3) '...una gran época total, donde se trenzan lo *brutal*, lo *injusto* y lo *inhumano*, que sólo pueden avalarse como *deformación/distorsión/deterioración*, finalidad *vacía/anonadante/inútil*. El formidable talento revisor, la extraordinaria magia verbal y la dolorida motivación de protesta son tres dimensiones del autor...' [p. 172], (4) 'Un peligro de la lectura sería la reiteración de lo sexual, no con "énfasis" (como dirían aquí los adictos al Spanglish) sino con reiteración *sotto voce*, como *desviación/insinuación/consolación*; es decir, con suavidad subjetiva (en momentos algo ávida) y no con objetiva condenación ética. Un lector inteligente no necesita que se le advierta que 'eso' no abundaba tanto 'allá' como 'aquí'...' [p. 177], (5) 'En el poemario (se refiere a *El Central*), es una de toques marginales, más explicables cuando la juventud está sometida a *maltrato/humillación/servilismo*, sin verdaderos *estímulos/alicientes/recompensas*.' [p. 177].

There is a certain humour in this proliferation of adjectives which say more about the critic's inclinations, than about Reinaldo Arenas's *oeuvre*. There is a parade of adjectives to which are added certain verbs and adverbs, many of them in italics as if to indicate their specific and relevant nature, not only in themselves, but also to the extent that they flag up as noteworthy what the critic is saying. This last stylistic feature constitutes one of the journalistic traits most popular amongst literary critics of 'Latin American literature'. This parade of adjectives, then, leads to a predictable banality '...ni *ingreso* en la realidad ni *progreso* hacia la prosperidad, sino regreso a la abyección primitiva. Es lo que Arenas nos proyecta.' [p. 172-3].

21. J.G., 'Madrid, España'

This journalistic article conceives of 'literature' in a nineteenth century mode: '¿Cuál es el status de la literatura? Su lucha desigual contra una realidad insoportable ¿puede hacernos evadir momentáneamente de ésta o contribuye, al contrario, a afianzarla, como conjetura el protagonista del relato de Reinaldo Arenas en la medida en que no será sino una variación de un mismo terror "y toda variación engrandece el objeto que la origina"?' [p. 179]. A mixture, as in the journalism of cultural supplements, of auto/biographical story and bookish reflection, this article undoubtedly has its place in the pages of Spanish newspapers such as *El país*.

22. C.R.N., 'Rutgers University'

To explain to us what Arenas does - without clarifying whether the author, the novel or the auto/biographical story is referred to - is to reinterpret rather than to interpret; and this is the aim of this article, which places *La loma del ángel* in one of so many academic typologies because 'según lo

revela Arenas con LLA es, más bien, un enriquecimiento porque con la nueva versión se expone, o mejor aún, se explora no la univocidad de CV, sino, más bien, su plurivalencia, su multiplicidad.' [p. 188]. In order to arrive at this conclusion the literary critic required a typological classification and, at the very least, to mention about ten academic critics - without forgetting the article's eight pages of argument.

Apparently, Arenas had set out on this novel a 'justificación de la transtextualidad como fenómeno que garantiza el espacio privilegiado de la literatura' [p. 182]. This is exactly the opposite to the activity of writing I have postulated for Arenas, in that, what academic critics term 'literature' yields its place to a question of writing which precedes and comprehends it. Certainly, defending the trade of literary critic and its academic specificity is an exercise for which many critics have used some of the books attributed to Reinaldo Arenas.

23. A.J.M.A., 'Barnard College-Columbia University'

'Puro título' (nothing but title) is an expression commonly employed to identify a piece of writing where the title's provocative qualities outweigh those of the arguments. 'Cecilia travestí: *La loma del ángel*' is undoubtedly an example of this. In fact, having devoted two pages to Jorge Luis Borges, this article posits a 'history of Latin American parody' [p.183] because, according to the critic, 'Hispanoamérica, la historia de la parodia, voluntaria e involuntaria, nos permite entender la historia literaria y la historia cultural.' [p. 193]. Historicism is certainly an element not in short supply in this article.

What is most attractive in this article, is that at no point does the critic mention in his ideas of parody, the question of the book's *reception*, taking

into account above all that he makes reference to 'involuntary parodies' [p.192]. What could this be other than a radical change in the market reception of a book? He is most definitely a nineteenth century critic: such a question not only cannot have a place in his argument but the 'involuntary parody' in fact consists of 'an erroneous reading which we have all carried out, the result of ignorance' [p. 192]. From here to upholding 'the real truth of the literary' there is a step which the writer of the article refrains from making, but of which he makes use at every point.

